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Yemeni-Eritrean Conflict

Eritrean Coverage of Conflict Over Islands

WA2112150095

For further reportage of the Eritrean-Yemeni confrontation over the Hanish Islands in the Red Sea, including official Eritrean Foreign Ministry statements, please see the East Africa section of the 19 December Sub-Saharan Africa DAILY REPORT and subsequent issues.

Salih: Mediation Acceptable if Eritrea Withdraws

EA2012203095 Omdurman Republic of Sudan Radio Network in Arabic 1900 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The Yemeni president, Ali Abdullah Salih, has said that Eritrea must withdraw its forces from the island of greater Hanish and release about 200 Yemeni POWs, as a precondition for any talks to resolve the existing dispute over the island between the two sides. The Yemeni president said if Eritrea accepts these demands, then Yemen will be ready to hold talks (?through) international mediation, so as to determine the fate of the island.

'Very Satsified' With U.S. Stand

MM2112101495 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 21 Dec 95 pp 1, 6

[Report on telephone interview with Yemeni President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih, in Sanaa, by Khayrallah Khayrallah in London on 20 December]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] London — President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih told AL-HAYAH over the telephone yesterday that the Eritreans "seized Hanish al-Kabir island in a treacherous manner." He added: "We had thought that our troops were safe, because dialogue had been continuing with the Eritreans and it had been agreed to continue the dialogue after the blessed month of Ramadan." He pointed out that the Eritreans attacked the island with a large force. There had been 75 soldiers on the island, who were reinforced by 110 soldiers after the first invasion attempt.

The Yemeni president was keen not to escalate matters. Asked how the Eritrean occupation will be confronted, he said that "they have no option but to withdraw, apologize, hand over the prisoners and the bodies of the three killed, and then engage in negotiations to resolve the sea borders issue as a whole, not just the three islands only."

Asked whether Yemen would retaliate if Eritrea does not respond to the call to withdraw from the island, he said: "We will adopt diplomatic methods with all brothers and friends. We reiterate that the best method, as far as we are concerned, is dialogue and diplomatic action."

Asked whether it was true that Eritrean President Isaia Afwerki asked to visit Sanaa and hold a meeting with him, he said: "He requested a meeting but we told him that no meeting can be held before these steps are taken, namely to withdraw, apologize, hand over prisoners and the bodies of those killed, and then engage in negotiations to resolve the sea borders issue."

Asked whether he is satisfied with the Arab stand, he said: "I am very satisfied with the Arab and international stands. I am certain that Eritrea's attempt to occupy others' territory by force is doomed to failure. No one seizes others' territory by force."

Asked whether he was satisfied with the U.S. position, he said: "I am very satisfied."

The Yemeni president said that he had not expected such a position from Eritrea, which gained its independence recently. He pointed out that what surprised him was that Asmara had agreed to hold negotiations between the two countries over the islands, but it exploited the agreement on negotiations to launch its "treacherous" attack on Hanish al-Kabir. 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih was keen to deny reports saying that the Eritreans have also occupied the two islands of Hanish al-Saghir and Jabal Zuqar. [passage omitted]

Salih Phones Regional Leaders to Discuss Conflict

JN2012214395 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Radio Network in Arabic 2000 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] A telephone conversation was held this evening between brother Lieutenant General 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih and his brother Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad. The two leaders discussed and exchanged views on a number of issues and developments of interest to the sisterly countries and the Arab nation, especially developments in the wake of the Eritrean aggression against the Yemeni al-Hanish al-Kabir Island.

The brother president reassured his brother President Hafiz al-Asad about the situation. He reiterated our country's eagerness to resolve differences with Eritrea peacefully within the framework of commitment to the international conventions and law.

Another telephone conversation between brother Lt. Gen. 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih and his brother Egyptian President Muhammad Husni Mubarak was held this evening. They discussed and exchanged views on issues and regional and Arab developments of interest to the two sisterly countries, as well as on the developments of the Eritrean aggression against the Yemeni al-Hanish al-Kabir Island. The brother president reviewed our country's efforts to contain the problem peacefully.

During the conversation, the brother president stressed our country's eagerness to resolve the differences on the maritime borders with Eritrea through dialogue and peaceful means, and in accordance with international conventions and laws in a manner that ensures the legitimate rights and maintains security and stability and the safety of international navigation in the Red Sea.

A telephone conversation was also held today between Lt. Gen. President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih and his brother Colonel Mu'ammar al- Qadhdhafi, leader of the 1 September revolution in sisterly Libya. The Libyan leader reassured himself about the developments of the situation in the wake of the Eritrean aggression against the Yemeni al-Hanish al-Kabir Island. They also discussed issues and developments of interest to the two brotherly countries and the Arab nation.

The brother president stressed our country's eagerness and readiness to resolve the maritime border differences with Eritrea through peaceful means and in accordance with the international conventions and law.

A telephone conversation was also held today between Lt. Gen. President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih and his brother Mauritanian President Maaouya Ould Sid Ahmed Taya. The two leaders discussed issues and developments of interest to the two countries, especially the developments in the wake of the Eritrean aggression against the Yemeni al-Hanish al-Kabir Island.

The brother president stressed our country's eagerness to resolve differences with Eritrea on the maritime borders through peaceful dialogue and in accordance with international conventions and law in a manner that maintains security, stability, and peace in the Red Sea region.

Salih Speech on 'Background' of Eritrea Relations

JN2112113195 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0430 GMT 21 Dec 95

[Speech by Yemeni President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih at meeting with Yemeni ulema, social figures, and representatives of Yemeni parties and organizations at the Police Academy in Sanaa on 20 December—recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Salih] Good morning, and may your day be filled with happiness. Brother audience members: I will try to explain the background of Yemeni-Eritrean relations before and after the independence. Yemeni-Eritrean relations have always been good, particularly since Yemen supported the Eritrean revolution and opened its maritime borders and its islands in the Red Sea in support of the Eritrean revolution. Hundreds—nay, more than 3,000-4,000 Eritreans are still on Yemeni soil. Yemen supported the Eritrean revolution until it won independence. Relations were good after independence. Eritrea's stand also was excellent in its support of Yemen during the sedition and our defense of unity.

Immediately following the [Eritrean] independence, Yemen proposed to the Eritrean Government that maritime borders in the Red Sea be demarcated. The brothers in Eritrea replied that the time was not appropriate. They said: We still are busy with the referendum and the formation of the state. We said that we had no objection to wait for the proper time to demarcate the maritime borders. Things proceeded normally, and there were no problems.

Early this year, 1995, a Yemeni-German company applied for a license to set up an investment project on al-Hanish island. The authorities granted it the necessary license to invest in al-Hanish island. This company started work in early 1995. Groups from the naval forces were present with the company to guard the equipment of the company. In November, the company and the group with it received an ultimatum from Eritrea to leave the island. After they received this ultimatum, the company and the group informed us about it. We contacted Eritrea, and from our side, we proposed the formation of a committee comprising the two countries' foreign and interior ministers to discuss the problem of the islands and the maritime borders, and not only the problem of al-Hanish island. Eritrea agreed and the committee was formed. It was made up of the foreign and interior ministers from both sides, as well as the ministers of fish resources from the two countries.

They held a meeting in Sanaa at which the Yemeni side presented four points, including the demarcation of maritime borders between Yemen and Eritrea within the framework of a bilateral dialogue. If bilateral dialogue fails, we would resort to arbitration. If this, too, fails, we would seek recourse through the International Court of Justice.

The Eritrean side insisted that the island be evacuated. The Yemeni side told it that this is a Yemeni island, that we were there before them, that we have major evidence proving that this is a Yemeni island. However, there is no reason we cannot hold a bilateral dialogue within the framework of international law and legitimate rights. A dialogue will be held. We do not mind if they can prove their ownership with their documents. We have been there especially since 1981. The lighthouses there are financed by the Yemeni Shipping Corporation. Even when the Eritrean revolutionaries were in (al-Quqah), al-

Hudaydah, (Nibi), (al-Maqa'), they used to move from these islands, from al-Hanish island to Zuqar island and from al-Hanish al-Kabir and al-Hanish al-Saghir islands, [word indistinct] and from (Abu Tayr). These were the real breeding grounds for Eritrean revolutionaries.

With Haile Selassie's empire and all its power, and the military force which belonged to Mengistu Haile Mariam, the Ethiopians did not dare move to these islands or attack the Eritrean revolutionaries on the islands, because they knew that this would create a problem with Yemen. The Eritrean revolutionaries used to launch their activities from these islands. Had they believed they had any right to the islands, the Ethiopians would not have remained silent and would not have let the Eritrean revolutionaries make their moves from these islands.

The Yemeni Republic's delegation, headed by the foreign minister and interior minister, went to Eritrea with a draft memorandum of understanding. The memorandum says that we are ready to hold a bilateral dialogue and solve the problem through cordial avenues. The memorandum stipulates that the dialogue will take from six months to one year. This period incorporates the options of bilateral dialogue, arbitration, or resorting to the International Court of Justice. The Eritrean side rejected this. Their only reply was that we had to evacuate the island. Our evidence and documents show that this is a Yemeni island. The delegation noted that the response in Eritrea is that there is no other alternative to evacuation of the island. The talk was not cordial. It was talk we are not accustomed to from a neighboring country with which we have had excellent relations. Their talk with our delegation was arrogant. Thus, it was not normal talk in light of our good relations with them.

The Yemeni delegation proposed to resume contacts after the month of Ramadan. The delegation asked them to think of this draft memorandum and then to resume contacts after Ramadan. The delegation carried a message from myself to President Isaias Afworki. At the same they did not arrange for a meeting between the delegation and President Isaias.

The delegation returned here and presented a report. Of course, we viewed the issue in good faith. Eritrea is a neighboring country; we have good relations with them; we never thought they would commit an adventurous act, until we were surprised late Friday [15 December] afternoon by naval hostilities that began from [word indistinct] island. The garrison was made up of some 75 men. There were six modern gunboats—not ordinary boats, but in fact modern gunboats [words indistinct].

The brothers in the western region tried to reinforce the forces on the island on Saturday morning, and began dispatching about 100 or 110 soldiers. At an early hour of the morning, the soldiers were landed by helicopters. The clashes continued between them and our men until the end of the day. We gave a military order, as long as we are unable to [word indistinct]. We gave an order to stop any military operations from our part, and we enforced a cease-fire. The issue ended like this, and the losses are three martyrs, and the rest are alive.

Following contacts between ourselves and Eritrea, we think that the problem should be resolved in an amicable and bilateral manner. A contact was held, and we ceased fire and did not carry out any military operations. Contacts were held. We propose to them three points: Returning the guests they are having, evacuating the island, and beginning negotiations. These are the three points we proposed to them. Of course, they particularly want [words indistinct] the president to come to [words indistinct] we receive him while the island is in his hands and on the basis that the island is his. This is impossible. They propose that they dispatch the interior minister or anybody else. We said to them we cannot receive anyone, unless they evacuate the island, return the soldiers and the bodies of the martyrs, and accept negotiations as a means of settlement. Of course, he should show readiness to evacuate the island, but will also set conditions for evacuating the islands and evacuating al-Hanish island and to begin negotiations. These are their conditions, which are to evacuate the islands, Hanish al- Saghir and Hanish al-Kabir, within the framework of dialogue. They should first evacuate al-Hanish al-Kabir and return the soldiers to Yemen, and then we are ready to conduct dialogue with them. Without this, we cannot. This should be done within the framework of the international law, the sea law, and within the framework of our legitimate rights. If there is someone who wants to [words indistinct] we do not mind within the framework of discussions, dialogue, and the peaceful solutions. But in this way, Yemen cannot accept, and the only option is to evacuate the island with all means, through peaceful means or through other legitimate means.

I wanted to avoid talking about this. But I have noticed confusion, anxiety, and disquiet among the Yemeni political forces and citizens. So it was necessary to come to this gathering to brief you on the background of this event which we did not want to happen between us and neighboring Eritrea. We have transcended the party coalition and moved within a larger scope to include all parties, political forces, and all those concerned in the national arena. If we confine ourselves to one or two parties, then that will mean the exclusion of others. We say that the homeland is the biggest party and is above all trivialities. Under hard circumstances, we cannot ignore the nation, which must be consulted through organizations, councils, unions, parties, etcetera. When necessary, we must all seek to make a sound decision.

Many are probably interested in Yemeni-Saudi relations. A delegation under Shaykh 'Abdallah Bin-Husayn al-Ahmar, speaker of the House of Representatives; Foreign Minister Dr. 'Abd-al-Karim al- Iryani, and Interior Minister Husayn 'Arab travelled to Saudi Arabia. The visit was in accordance with the memorandum of understanding signed in Ramadan [February 1994], and was aimed to follow up and assess the work of the subcommittees set up in accordance with the memorandum of understanding. The four subcommittees are the economic, military, border delineation, and markers renovation subcommittees. They [word indistinct] in al- Ta'if. The recent session was headed on our side by Shaykh 'Abdallah and attended by ministers. On the Saudi sides, it was attended by Princes Sultan, Nayif, and Sa'ud al-Faysal. In fact the negotiations were good. The impression of the delegation—Shaykh 'Abdallah, 'Abd-al-Karim al-Iryani, and Husayn 'Arab—is good. We hope that it will continue to be so, and that dialogue will continue [applause]. I wish this gathering success. May God's peace and blessings be upon you. [applause]

Yemen Reinforces Troops on Red Sea Islands

NC2112125795 Paris AFP in English
1137 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Sanaa, Dec 21 (AFP) — Yemen has stepped up its military forces on two Red Sea islands close to Hanish al-Kabir which was captured four days ago by Eritrean forces, western diplomats said here Thursday [21 December]

"The Yemenis have recently set up on Hanish al-Saghir and Jabal Zuqar ground-to-ground missile ramps and long-range pieces of artillery," a diplomat told AFP, asking to remain anonymous.

Yemeni troops have also been deployed on the two islands to "tighten the stranglehold around the Eritrean troops deployed since Monday" on Hanish al-Kabir (Greater Hanish), another diplomat said.

He said the Sanaa government "intends first to recover Greater Hanish to be able to negotiate from a position of strength with the Eritreans."

Eritrean troops captured Hanish al-Kabir on Monday after a three-day battle in which a total of nine soldiers were killed.

Yemeni President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih on Wednesday laid down a withdrawal of Eritrean forces from the island and the release of all 180 Yemeni prisoners as pre-conditions to any talks on the island's status.

Meanwhile, Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin arrived here Thursday on a mission to try to mediate in the armed conflict between Yemen and Eritrea over the disputed island.

He said he was carrying a message to Salih on "ways of solving the territorial differences between" the two countries.

He told the official Yemeni agency SABA' that Ethiopia was prepared to "work to find a peaceful solution and end the tension between the two countries."

The ETHIOPIAN NEWS AGENCY said Mesfin would also travel to Asmara with a message to President Isaias Afworki.

UN Secretary General Butrus Butrus-Ghali is also to personally intervene in the dispute, his office announced Wednesday.

He is scheduled to travel to the Gulf next week and will try to bring about a peaceful solution to the conflict.

The volcanic island of Hanish al-Kabir, which is part of an archipelago formerly in Ottoman possession and whose status has never been defined under international convention, controls access to the Bab el-Mandeb straits between the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

Meanwhile, Omani Foreign Minister Yusuf bin-'Alawi bin-'Abdallah called for Eritrea to withdraw from the island in a statement to the Yemeni government daily OCTOBER 14 published in the southern city of Aden.

He said it was "illogical and unacceptable to call on Yemen to hold negotiations when Eritrean troops remain on the island of Greater Hanish," saying the two sides had to return to the previous status quo.

Eritrea Accused of Detaining 70 Yemeni Fishermen

NC2112122995 Paris AFP in English
1153 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Sanaa, Dec 21 (AFP) — Yemen accused Eritrea on Thursday [21 December] of detaining 70 Yemeni fishermen and said it was an "escalation" of their dispute over the Red Sea island of Hanish al-Kabir.

"Eritrean forces carried out a new act of piracy in Yemeni territorial waters and detained 70 Yemeni fishermen and their boats," a government official told AFP.

"The Yemeni government considers this a new escalation by Eritrea, which is not demonstrating any cooperation to preserve stability in the region," he added.

Western diplomats here said Yemen has stepped up its military forces on two Red Sea islands close to Hanish al-Kabir which was captured Monday by Eritrean forces after a three-day battle which left nine dead.

The volcanic island of Hanish al-Kabir, which is part of an archipelago formerly in Ottoman possession and whose status has never been defined under international convention, controls access to the Bab al-Mandab straits between the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

Yemeni President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih on Wednesday laid down a withdrawal of Eritrean forces from the island and the release of 180 Yemeni prisoners captured during the fighting as pre-conditions to any talks on the island's status.

Yemeni Envoy Meets Arab League Chief on Dispute

NC1812152795 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1345 GMT 18 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 18 Dec (MENA) — Arab league Secretary General Dr. 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid today met with Ahmad Luqman, Yemen's ambassador in Cairo and permanent representative at the Arab League.

Commenting on the meeting, the Yemeni envoy said that he had briefed Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid on the developments in the naval dispute between Yemen and Eritrea which erupted a few days ago. He said that the Yemeni government was surprised by the all-out offensive of the Eritrean government on Jazirat Hanish al-Kabir in the Red Sea on Friday. The Yemeni envoy added that he briefed the Arab league secretary general on the Yemeni stance and the government's authority to defend its territories and sovereignty over its territorial waters as legitimate rights recognized by international norms.

In his statement, the Yemeni ambassador stressed the need to eliminate the results of the Eritrean military offensive on the island. He pointed out that the Yemeni island had supported the Eritrean Liberation Front and acted as a staging ground for the liberation of Eritrea.

The Yemeni ambassador voiced his country's surprise at the Eritrean government's armed attack, especially since Yemeni-Eritrean relations are strongly based on the principles of good neighborliness and nonintervention in domestic affairs.

The Yemeni ambassador noted that the Yemeni prime minister and foreign minister held a meeting in Asmara last week. The Yemeni and the Eritrean officials agreed during the meeting to postpone any discussion on the issue of borders between Yemen and Eritrea until the end of February. They also agreed to discuss the issue on the basis of their good bilateral relations.

Responding to a question on whether Israel had anything to do with the offensive on the Yemeni island, the Yemeni ambassador said there is no clear-cut evidence about any Israeli participation in this offensive.

The Yemeni ambassador said that the Arab League secretary general's stance on this issue emanates from the fact that the Red Sea should be a peaceful region. He added that Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid also believes that this dispute should be resolved within the framework of bilateral relations. He said that the Arab League will issue a statement on the dispute later today.

On the question of what will happen if efforts fail to work out a solution to the dispute, the Yemeni ambassador in Cairo said that Yemen proposed that the dispute be solved in a friendly way so that peaceful dialogue would remain the sole means for solving this crisis. He maintained that in the absence of a satisfactory solution by two sides, the issue will be referred to arbitration or to the International Court of Justice.

The Yemeni ambassador held the Eritrean government responsible for this serious aggression, which threatens the security of navigation in the region.

Paper Critical of Regional Reaction to Invasion

MM2012193895 London AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI in Arabic 20 Dec 95 p 1

[Article by 'Abd-al-Bari 'Atwan: "Congratulations to Eritrea on Its Victory!"]

[FBIS Translated Text] We expected anything in these bad times for the Arabs. We expected an Arab conspiracy to destroy Iraq, a Libyan blockade, Sudan's isolation, and we also expected the secession war in Yemen and the Israeli flag flying on the Israeli Embassy in Damascus. We also expected Israel to join the Arab League, but it never crossed our mind that Eritrea would bully us and invade one of our Yemeni islands in the Red Sea. There is no worse disgrace and no bigger humiliation than this.

We are ashamed to describe the Eritrean action in Hanish islands as an aggression, and we are even more ashamed to use common terms like "victory" and "defeat" for this situation. We know Eritrea's size and the quality of its Army and we also know the size, quality, and armament of Yemen's Army, which has just emerged victorious from the secession war.

What shames us more is the Arab stand on this tragedy. With the exception of Sudan and Libya which "condemned" it, we have not heard any comment from any other Arab state, as if the incident had occurred in Scandinavia or the South Pole.

We find it difficult to understand this ardent "neutrality" adopted by the Egyptian Government toward this crisis and expressed by its foreign minister who asked both states to control themselves and resort to international arbitration, as though what happened did not concern Egypt and does not pose a danger to it.

Hanish island, which was invaded by Eritrea with Israeli help, is situated at the entrance to the Red Sea and controls international navigation coming from or heading toward the Suez Canal. However, it seems that the Egyptian Government's strategies have changed drastically and no longer rely on the three elements [not further identified] that governed its past actions. This strategy is now limited to how to "liberate" the al-Hala'ib triangle, topple the regime in Sudan, and support all the movements demanding its [Sudan's] partition. This is the same strategy which led to the alliance with Asmara, encouraging it to reinforce its relations with Israel, regardless of the intensified Israeli military infiltration in the Red Sea.

We hope that the Egyptian Government realizes the extent of the blatant strategic mistakes it made by allying itself with Asmara and disregarding its military relations with Israel. We also hope that [Sudanese] President al-Bashir will realize his huge mistake of putting his trust in Isaias Afwerki and his Popular Front and helping him to come to power in Asmara at the expense of the other organizations and groups which offered thousands of martyrs to achieve independence.

Yemen, in short, is paying the price for its people's demonstrations in support of Iraq when it faced the destructive U.S. attack during the second Gulf war. The Kuwaitis and their allies are still after their pound of Yemeni flesh, no matter how long it takes.

This is another conspiracy to put pressure on Yemen by opening new fronts that it did not expect, in order to weaken its position in the negotiations for the demarcation of its southern borders. The Eritrean claw is one of the main accessories in this context, and it is possible to confirm that this is the case through the moves of the Eritrean president, his recent visits to the Gulf capitals, and his high-level meetings there.

It is regrettable that the situation has deteriorated so much in the Arab homeland, and that the Arab nation has become a stiff carcass surrounded by hyenas. However, it seems that this deterioration is necessary in order to demolish what is standing on defective foundations and clear the way for building a sound edifice. The change that took place in Eastern Europe and the subsequent adjustments must extend to the Arab region sooner or later, despite all the repressive actions intended to stop it.

In the past, we demanded that an Arab summit be held to salvage whatever can be salvaged and stop the collapse. The chasm has widened, however, and Arab rulers who intend to remain in power all this time are instruments of destruction rather than construction, tools for Hebrew partition plans, and therefore cannot be the opponent and the referee at the same time.

We understand only now the reasons for Eritrea's and its president's hesitating to join the Arab League. We admit that it was right, for who wants to join a sinking ship and belong to a nation blown to the wind, of which only the name remains?

Congratulations to Eritrea on this victory and congratulations to the Egyptian Government on this great victory for its allies in Asmara and in occupied Jerusalem. It seems that Yemen and its people have no choice but to enter the Israeli era through the gateway of the Yemeni-born Israeli singer Ofra Haza. God only knows.

Inter-Arab Affairs

Arab League Chief Stresses Need to Contain Dispute

NC2012141495 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1340 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 20 Dec (MENA)—Arab League Secretary General Dr. 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid has stressed the need to contain the Yemeni-Eritrean dispute over the island of Greater Hanish and put it in its proper perspective.

This came in a message Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid sent to OAU Secretary General Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim in reply to a message he received from Dr. Salim in this regard.

In his message, Dr. 'Abd-al-Majid called for every possible effort to restore the situation to normal and create a favorable atmosphere for both parties to engage in a fruitful and constructive dialogue to establish security and stability in this sensitive region.

Meeting on Removal of Mass Destruction Weapons

NC1812124495 Cairo MENA in English
1200 GMT 18 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, Dec 18 (MENA) — The technical committee, assigned to follow up the draft Arab (regional agreement) on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, started its meetings here today at experts' level.

The meetings are held under the Arab League Assistant Secretary General for Political and International Affairs Ambassador 'Adnan 'Imran. The three-day meetings will deal with the legal and technical aspects of the agreement. They are attended by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Tunisia, Jordan, and Palestine.

The agreement underlines the need to clear the Middle East from weapons of mass destruction and the abidance by all countries of the area including Israel and Iran with this agreement.

Discussion will also cover the drawing up of a comprehensive Arab visualization to serve as an international pressure to compel Israel to join the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty [NPT].

The regional agreement calls for having all nuclear institutions in the Middle East, mainly Israel, subject to the International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA] control, 'Umran said.

Palestinian Affairs

'Arafat on Hamas Dialogue, Peace Process

JN2012164895 Manama WAKH in Arabic 1255 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Abu Dhabi, 20 Dec (WAKH) — Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat said the Jerusalem issue cannot be encroached on pending discussion during the final stage which begins on 4 May.

In statements to the EMIRATES NEWS AGENCY, the Palestinian president said that there are provisions regarding the Jerusalem issue enshrined in the letter of assurances which the Palestinian National Authority received from international parties, especially the United States.

On the current dialogue between the National Authority and the Palestinian opposition, 'Arafat said that the dialogue is being held with the Hamas [Islamic Resistance] Movement, the Islamic Jihad, and representatives from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine in the homeland, and all the Palestinian forces and factions. He added: This dialogue is a comprehensive national dialogue based on national foundations and national unity that will help us confront the challenges we face in this historical and fateful stage in the Palestinian people's struggle and the Palestinian cause.

'Arafat said the elections to be held in the autonomous rule areas next month are legislative and presidential elections, and all parties can participate in them. So far, 11 movements, groupings, and parties have been registered for participation in the forthcoming legislative elections.

On the U.S. Congress decision to transfer the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, 'Arafat said that this stand contradicts the U.S. Administration's stand as enunciated in the letter of assurances that was signed by the successive U.S. secretaries of state. This stand also conflicts with international legitimacy and the UN resolutions, and with the stand the world at large observes on holy Jerusalem.

With respect to the current peace process in the Middle East, President 'Arafat welcomed U.S. efforts to resume the dialogue on the Syrian-Israeli track and the Lebanese-Israeli track. He said the agreement that was concluded and for whose sake we went to Madrid following former U.S. President Bush's initiative is for a just and comprehensive peace in the region on all the Arab tracks—the Lebanese, Jordanian, Syrian, Egyptian, and Palestinian tracks, because this peace is not a Palestinian or Arab demand, but a world demand in the Middle East in view of the sensitive and strategic importance of this region to the world.

PA, Hamas Talks Continue, Fail in Cairo

Fifth Round Ends

NC2012155095 Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt Radio Network in Arabic 1500 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The fifth round of talks between representatives of the Palestinian Authority [PA] and Hamas [Islamic Resistence Movement] ended in Cairo at noon today. Hamas official spokesman Muhammad Nazzal said the two sides discussed various issues, such as the elections and the PA's commitment to signed agreements. He added that the two sides put forward their views as a step toward identifying the points of agreement and disagreement.

Nazzal said a joint statement on the points of agreement and disagreement is expected to be issued tonight or tomorrow. These talks are the first high-level official dialogue between the PA and Hamas.

Delegates Comment on Talks

NC2012195195 London MBC Television in Arabic 1800 GMT 20 Dec 95

[Report from MBC's Cairo correspondent Tariq al-Shami — italicized passages recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [al-Shami] Negotiations between the Palestinian Authority [PA] and the Islamic

Resistance Movement, Hamas, entered a crucial phase on the third day of the ongoing dialogue between the two sides in Cairo. Two key issues, Hamas' participation in the elections and its relinquishing the armed struggle, have not yet been settled. The PA has proposed several formulas regarding the two issues.

[Unidentified PA spokesman] *As for the PA's commitments and its halting armed action, I believe we proposed definitive formulas to be included in the statement or agreement.*

[Al-Shami] As for Hamas' participation in the elections, the PA delegation spokesman said:

[Spokesman] *Generally there is a formula for participation, for partial participation, or for no boycott. They can choose one of these formulas. We hope it will be the first, that is, participation in elections.*

[Al-Shami] But in an interview with MBC, the Hamas delegation head [Khalid Mish'al] denied the plans had been accepted.

[Mish'al] *Reports that Hamas has accepted some of the proposed formulas are untrue. Yes, the PA delegation suggested that the issues of elections, Jerusalem, participation, or the call for nonparticipation, be handled separately. We listened to their views but, as I said, views were exchanged and a decision on these points was postponed until the dialogue is over.*

[Al-Shami] *But what about your stance on halting armed action against the Israeli forces?*

[Mish'al] *When this subject was discussed, Hamas stressed its view that as long as the occupation of Palestinian soil continues, it will be meaningless and unreasonable to ask the Palestinian people to give up their rifle and the option of jihad.*

[Al-Shami] Officials on both sides did not rule out their dialogue continuing in the coming weeks.

The PA-Hamas negotiations are expected to continue another day. But it is not certain whether Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat, who is expected in Cairo tomorrow, will join the talks between the two sides.

'Decisive' Sixth Round Begins

JN2012204495 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1900 GMT 20 Dec 95

[Report by Hanadi al-Imam in Cairo]

[FBIS Translated Text] The sixth round of national dialogue between the delegations of the [Palestinian] National Authority [NA] and Hamas was resumed at 1900 today. This round is expected to be the final one. This round was originally scheduled for 1530, after the end of the first meeting that was held today. The round was delayed at the request of Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] in order to hold more consultations.

Hamas official spokesman Muhammad Nazzal said this afternoon that he will convey to the NA delegation the movement's final position on participating in the Palestinian elections, scheduled to be held on 20 January. He also said that he will also inform the NA delegation of Hamas's final position on the military operations and armed struggle.

It is noteworthy that the Oslo agreement, concluded by the PLO and Israel, includes a pledge by the NA to stop all military operations that are launched against the Israeli occupation forces.

Nabil 'Amr, political adviser to President Yasir 'Arafat, said the evening session that began nearly two hours ago, will be decisive because as Hamas spokesman Nazzal said, today is the day of conclusions through which the points of agreement will be defined in order to work out a mechanism for implementation.

The NA delegation proposed specific formulas to be included in the joint final statement of the NA and Hamas delegations. Since the two delegations believe the session they held was positive, it is expected that the two sides will agree that there should be no multiple authority that rules the Palestinian people, and that Hamas will not participate in the upcoming Palestinian elections, except for the elections in Jerusalem as previously agreed, because the issue of Jerusalem has a special significance, and all Palestinian political forces in the city should be united so that the NA can enter the negotiations on the final status under the umbrella of Palestinian national unity in order to avoid the negative repercussions of inter-Palestinian fighting and to preserve Palestinian national unity.

President 'Arafat is expected to arrive in Cairo tomorrow, Thursday to endorse this agreement or the joint statement of the two delegations.

Sixth Round Ends

NC2112101295 Cairo MENA in English 0846 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, Dec 21 (MENA)—The PNA [Palestinian National Authority] and Hamas delegations wound up their sixth round of talks last night during which they reached an agreement on setting up a four-man wording committee (two from each side) to forge a final statement for this round dealing with points of agreement and disagreement.

The two sides resumed their meetings this morning and the final statement is due to be issued later today.

In statements to MENA, Deputy Chairman of the Palestinian National Council Salim al Za'nun, who is leading the PNA delegation to the meetings, pointed out that the statement will cover the topics discussed, such as the movement's participation in the elections.

We tried to persuade some members of Hamas to participate in the legislative council after they register the names of their supporters. But they apologized, pointing out that their circumstances are not appropriate for taking part in this round, al- Za'nun said.

The Hamas delegation reiterated that they are not against elections and that every party has a right to take part in them, he added.

Speaking about national unity, the second agenda item, al-Za'nun made it clear that there is identity of views in this connection and other items on the agenda.

Palestinian leader Yasir 'Arafat will attend part of the final session, due to be held later today between the two sides, al-Za'nun said.

The two sides are eager to intensify efforts to release all Palestinian detainees, including Hamas supporters, he said.

The two sides also agreed to negotiate on the talks recently slated for May between the PNA and Israel, which will deal with Jerusalem, refugees, borders, and settlements, he added.

Hamas Expected To Back Elections

JN2112084095 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 0600 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The national dialogue between a delegation of the [Palestinian] National Authority and a delegation of Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] will be concluded in Cairo today. Hamas sources expected a decision by Hamas to take part in the legislative elections in occupied Jerusalem. The sources added that the Hamas delegation will also announce Hamas' commitment to the Palestinian international obligations.

Justice Minister Furayh Abu-Middayn, who is also a delegate attending the dialogue sessions, expected Hamas to take part in the elections one way or another. He also expected President Yasir 'Arafat to arrive in Cairo at the conclusion of his Gulf tour.

'Arafat Meets Delegates in Cairo

NC2112085195 Cairo MENA in Arabic 0840 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 21 Dec (MENA)—Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat arrived in Cairo from Abu Dhabi this morning on a brief visit to Egypt, during which he will meet with President Husni Mubarak to discuss progress in the Middle East peace process.

He was received at the airport by Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa.

'Arafat is expected to receive the members of the Palestinian Authority [PA] and Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] delegations to the dialogue that is seeking to reconcile the two sides. The dialogue opened in Cairo last Monday [18 December].

The two sides are expected to issue a statement today determining the points of agreement and disagreement in their dialogue.

PA, Hamas Fail To Agree

NC2112121095 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1153 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 21 Dec (MENA)—The delegations representing the Palestinian Authority [PA] and Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] have failed to reach agreement on the disputed points, particularly on Hamas' participation in the elections and ceasing armed struggle against the Israeli occupation authorities.

Muhammad Nazzal, spokesman for Hamas, told reporters that the movement will not take part in the upcoming legislative elections and that it will not stop armed struggle.

Nazzal said: We did not say that we have certain commitments to the PA. He added: Our national struggle targets not the PA but the Israeli occupation. It is not the job of the PA to protect the occupation; and as long as the occupation continues, the armed struggle will continue.

Nazzal continued: We agreed to hold further rounds of negotiations. He pointed out that the Palestinian people's problems do not result from the continued Hamas military operations against the occupation, but rather from the occupation itself.

Nabil 'Amr, spokesman for the Palestinian Authority delegation, said that the dialogue with Hamas was important in terms of opening channels of communication between the two sides. This will develop "future principles," he said.

He added that the spirit that prevailed through that dialogue was much better than what it was in the past and that the movement's delegation affirmed that they will neither play a negative role nor obstruct Palestinian voting in the elections.

The Palestinian Authority spokesman added: We seek to persuade Hamas to commit itself to the agreements the Authority committed itself to. This needs more dialogue, he remarked.

He added: The Hamas movement agrees with us on completing the liberation of the land and establishing a Palestinian state. There are no negative implications of President Yasir 'Arafat's absence from the dialogue with the movement, he said.

'Amr pointed out that the two sides agreed to resume the dialogue later at a place to be agreed upon.

Pope's Letter Calls Jerusalem 'Occupied Territory'

JN2112094195 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 0600 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] His Holiness Pope John Paul II has reiterated the firm Vatican stand on the city of Jerusalem, which views the city as occupied territory.

This came in a message his holiness the pope sent to President Yasir 'Arafat, which was received by Dr. Nabil Sha'th, minister of planning and international cooperation, when he met with a Vatican delegation led by Jean-Louise Tauran, Vatican secretary for relations with states, at the ministry's premises in Gaza yesterday. The talks addressed the Islamic-Christian dialogue and the Vatican stand on the holy city.

'Urayqat on Tel Aviv Talks With Moshe Shahal

JN2012125095 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 0500 GMT 20 Dec 95

[Telephone interview with Dr. Sa'ib 'Urayqat, minister of local government in the Palestinian Authority and acting chairman of the Central Election Committee, in Jericho, by unidentified correspondent in the studio; from the "A New Day" program—live]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Correspondent] Dr. Sa'ib 'Urayqat, minister of local government and acting chairman of the Election Committee: Good morning.

['Urayqat] Good morning.

[Correspondent] Dr. Sa'ib: You met with Israeli Minister of Police Moshe Shahal last night. What happened at this meeting?

['Urayqat] The meeting was held at the minister's office in Tel Aviv yesterday. The only issue on the agenda concerned arrangements for elections in the Jerusalem constituency and the implementation of the provisions of the Taba agreement in this regard. As a matter of fact, Minister Shahal reiterated the Israeli Government's commitment to implement all that has been agreed with regard to the electoral roll, the candidates list, election propaganda campaigns in the city of Jerusalem which are due to begin on 30 December, the voting process, and security arrangements. At this meeting, we also agreed to hold an expanded meeting next Sunday, which experts from both sides will attend, to discuss all details and work out a detailed agreement to implement the Taba accord provisions in this regard.

[Correspondent] Dr. Sa'ib 'Urayqat: You are the acting chairman of the Election Committee. Why has no new Central Election Committee been named thus far?

['Urayqat] As you must be well aware, the local government Election Committee has resigned. I have been asked to continue my duties on a temporary basis. As you are well aware, there is currently anticipation over the outcome of the dialogue currently under way in Cairo between the [Palestinian] Authority and the brothers within Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement]. It is our hope that these talks will produce a positive outcome so that brothers within the Palestinian opposition will be included in the next committee. At any rate, we will not be waiting for long. It is my belief that on Thursday, when the brother president returns home, the new Central Election Committee will be named.

[Correspondent] Dr. Sa'ib 'Urayqat: Do the Israelis have the right to veto any names?

['Urayqat] Not at all.

[Correspondent] I am asking this question, because there have been news reports to this effect.

['Urayqat] Such reports are strange. The Israelis have nothing to do with the formation of our internal structures, with our election constituencies, with regional offices, or with over 8,000 workers currently working for the Central Election Committee.

[Correspondent] Dr. Sa'ib 'Urayqat: Good morning.

['Urayqat] Good morning to you.

'Arafat Urges Kuwait To Respond to Reconciliation

JN2012131595 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1200 GMT 20 Dec

[FBIS Translated Text] His Excellency President Yasir 'Arafat will hold talks in Abu Dhabi today with His Highness Shaykh Zayid Bin-Sultan Al Nuhayyan, President of the United Arab Emirates [UAE], and a number of ranking UAE officials. The talks will deal with the means of boosting UAE-Palestinian cooperation and the recent developments of the peace process in light of the National Authority's takeover of a number of Palestinian cities in the northern West Bank.

Earlier, 'Arafat, in a statement to the official QATARI NEWS AGENCY in Doha, underlined the need for reviving joint Arab action and solidarity to realize the pan-Arab goals. He urged the Kuwaiti Government to respond to the Palestinian initiatives in order to overcome the repercussions of the Gulf war, and stand by the Palestinian people, as it has always done.

His excellency noted the strong relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. He asserted that transient crises will not affect faith in the common objectives and one Arab destiny.

Arab-Israeli Talks

Israel Expected To Propose 'Intensive' Talks

TA2112092495 Tel Aviv DAVAR RISHON in Hebrew 21 Dec 95 pp 1, 2

[Report by Arye Dayan and Washington correspondent Drora Perl]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] Israel will propose to Syria to hold intensive and uninterrupted negotiations in January and February, initially leading to the formulation of a joint declaration of principles and later to the signing of a peace treaty.

Israel will propose to launch such negotiations immediately after U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher's visit to the Middle East, scheduled to take place one week after the two rounds of talks in Washington.

A proposal to this effect, which has been emerging in discussions being held lately in Jerusalem in anticipation of the talks, was mentioned yesterday in the meeting of the senior political forum summoned by Prime Minister Shim'on Peres in his office.

This forum has actually replaced the political-security inner cabinet, which Peres has so far abstained from forming. It was attended by Ministers Ehud Baraq, Yosi Beilin, Moshe Shahal, Yosi Sarid, Hayim Ramon, David Liba'i, and Avraham Shohat, as well as by Uri Savir, Foreign Ministry director general and coordinator of the political negotiations.

According to one cabinet minister, the intensive negotiations will be held "without interruption and until white smoke emerges [referring to the final stage of papal elections]." Israel will propose to hold them in one of the following three formats: a shuttle trip between Damascus and Jerusalem by a senior U.S. official, apparently Christopher; direct talks in Washington on a senior political level, possibly of foreign ministers, either with or without Christopher's participation; negotiations launched by a summit meeting between Peres and Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad and continuing at a senior ministerial level.

A senior source in Jerusalem said that Israel prefers the third option, but will be willing to accept either of the other two. "We prefer direct negotiations on a senior political level, but we will also agree to a shuttle mission. What is important to us is that the negotiations be held at a fast pace," the source affirmed. [passage omitted]

Algeria

Foreign Ministry on Yemeni-Eritrean Conflict

LD2012213695 Algiers ENTV Television Network in Arabic 1900 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Our Foreign Minister Mohamed Salah Dembri was received by Egyptian President Husni Mubarak in Cairo today. [passage omitted]

On the Yemeni-Eritrean conflict on Greater Hanish Island, Mohamed Salah Dembri said Algeria refused the use of military force to resolve political differences between countries and urged parties concerned to resort to dialogue and negotiations to settle disputes in peaceful means in accordance with endorsed international conventions and charters.

A statement issued by the Algerian Foreign Ministry today said that Algeria was willing, within this framework, to offer its contributions, if it was deemed desirable, to achieve a peaceful settlement for this dispute between two countries that were linked by bonds of friendship and good cooperation.

Daily: FIS Expects Madani To Be Released

LD2112115495 Paris Radio France International in French 0730 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The Arabic daily newspaper AL-HAYAH reports that Abassi Madani, one of the leaders of the FIS, the Islamic Salvation Front, is currently living in a villa located in the suburbs of Algiers. According to the paper, the FIS is apparently expecting the release of Shaykh Madani and of another leader of the organization, Abdelkader Hachani, the president of the FIS's provisional executive bureau, who has been detained without trial for four years.

Army Makes 'Major Attack' on 'Armed Elements'

MM2112101995 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 21 Dec 95 p 6

[Unattributed report: "Algeria: Battles in Ain Defla, Armed Elements' Families Surrender"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Algiers, AL-HAYAH — Eye-witnesses have told AL-HAYAH that Algerian Army forces, supported by helicopters, launched a major attack on the mountainous areas in Tebessa and Chelif governorates (northwest of Ain Defla).

They added that they saw families in the mountainous areas surrendering to the army, explaining that they are "the families of armed elements" who live in the rugged Ain Defla mountains.

Informed sources have confirmed these reports and explained that battles began some days ago between the Armed Forces and the armed groups in the region, and that the army was able to pinpoint "the armed elements' hiding places" using aircraft.

This is the second time in a year that the Armed forces have launched a confrontation of this size with the armed groups.

Helicopters previously distributed leaflets in the area's villages and mountains, giving guarantees to those armed elements who surrender. [passage omitted]

Television Director Kidnapped, Murdered

LD2112123795 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1200 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] A statement issued by the Security Council today said that the head of the production unit at the Algerian national television Mohamed Belkacem was found killed yesterday, Wednesday, at about 1940 in an area called El Mardja, in Baraki quarter, eastern Algiers.

Mohamed Belkacem, who was 46 years old, married with two children, was kidnapped yesterday about 1000 near his residence by armed "criminals."

Security Forces Eliminate 22 'Criminals'

LD2012190995 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1700 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] A security statement issued today says that during various search operations, the security forces eliminated 22 "criminals," 14 of whom were in Msila.

The security forces recovered a quantity of weapons and ammunition during these operations, which took place in Msila, Blida, Constantine, Chlef, Ain Defla, Jijel, and El Tarf. [passage omitted]

Egypt

Musa Urges Peaceful End to Yemen-Eritrea Dispute

NC2012151395 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1050 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 20 Dec (MENA)—Egypt has repeated its call for an immediate peaceful solution to the Yemeni-Eritrean dispute.

This came in a statement by Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa, who added that the conflict affects the security of the entire region. He also noted that the issue is currently a subject of negotiations.

Musa, who was speaking after President Husni Mubarak's meeting today with Algerian Foreign Minister Mohamed Salah Dembri, said that both Yemen and

Eritrea are interested in settling the issue peacefully and preventing the dispute from turning into a wider military conflict.

Musa pointed out that if matters are allowed to escalate, the situation will be uncontrollable.

Asked to comment on the accusations made by some quarters that Israel is intervening in the Yemeni-Eritrean dispute, Musa said: I cannot say anything definite about this issue. All matters have a certain logic, politics have assumptions, and this issue has certain implications.

'Amr Musa declared: Egypt is of course interested in seeing this issue settled politically without delay and prevented from escalating. Red Sea issues are not simple affairs. Egypt certainly has a position on this issue, namely, that Yemen and Eritrea should settle the affair peacefully and swiftly.

Asked if Egypt is mediating between the two countries, Musa replied: You heard President Mubarak's declaration yesterday that Egypt and other parties are willing to mediate, but it is clear that Eritrea and Yemen are communicating with each other and discussing the affair. Egypt has been informed of developments as they occurred.

Musa stressed that this dispute can affect the entire region's security.

Yemeni President Calls Mubarak

NC2012175095 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1718 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 20 Dec (MENA)—President Husni Mubarak received a telephone call from Yemeni President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih tonight. They exchanged views on developments in the dispute between Yemen and Eritrea over the island of Greater Hanish.

President Mubarak emphasized Egypt's eagerness to reach a peaceful solution to end the dispute between Yemen and Eritrea. President Mubarak also reiterated his statement yesterday that he appeals to Yemen and Eritrea to resort to reason, avert bloodshed, and solve the dispute peacefully in line with international charters.

Mubarak Prepared To Mediate

NC2112065595 Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt Radio Network in Arabic 0500 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa has reiterated the Egyptian position that underlines the need to resolve the Yemeni-Eritrean dispute peacefully and instantly. He pointed out that the dispute affects regional security. The foreign minister added that President Husni Mubarak has confirmed that Egypt is prepared to mediate between Yemen and Eritrea and that it is following up on the matter, noting that the two sides briefed Egypt on developments.

Information Minister Comments on Cabinet Meeting

NC2112084895 Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt Radio Network in Arabic 0500 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The Council of Ministers at a meeting yesterday under the chairmanship of Dr. 'Atif Sidqi decided to entrust the various ministries with the task of preparing executive plans and timetables to implement the policies President Husni Mubarak as outlined in his speech to the People's Assembly and Consultative Council at the inauguration of the new parliamentary session last Saturday [16 December].

Information Minister Safwat al-Sharif stated that the Council of Ministers will discuss these plans at its next meeting. In statements following the meeting, Minister al-Sharif said that Dr. Sidqi had pointed out that the government policy statement will include the state's plan to realize the goals the president put forward in his speech.

The Council of Ministers reviewed a report by Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa outlining ongoing efforts to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East and stressing the need to provide a favorable atmosphere for progress on the Syrian-Israeli track and to take advantage of the initiatives and the flexibility the two sides have shown to bring their views closer.

The Council also reviewed the outcome of the meetings of the African Mechanism on the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes held recently in Addis Ababa, the determination to oblige Sudan to comply with its decision to hand over the defendants involved in the assault on President Mubarak's motorcade in Addis Ababa last June, and the conclusive evidence Addis Ababa has submitted on the crime.

The information minister pointed out that the Council of Ministers insists that Sudan must rectify its course, return to its senses, hand over the defendants, and publicly condemn terrorism and state its refusal to harbor terrorists out of respect for international relations and charters.

Safwat al-Sharif added that the Council of Ministers reviewed a report by the Ministry of Interior that assessed the national and security performance during the People's Assembly elections and affirmed the completely impartial position that the government and the security agencies displayed throughout the elections.

The information minister added that the Council of Ministers reviewed developments in the security confrontation with terrorism and extremism and the security agencies' success in aborting terrorist schemes and apprehending terrorists whose involvement has been proven. It also reviewed reports on the involvement of some Sudanese elements that played a central role in these schemes.

He pointed out that the Council of Ministers stressed the need to keep up the policy of firmly confronting terrorist attempts to infiltrate the country and undermine peace in Egypt, so that the homeland's and the citizens security can be safeguarded.

The information minister said that the Council of Ministers studied a report on the situation of supplies, noting the availability of strategic goods, primarily wheat, flour, oil and sugar. The report points out that the Ministry of Supplies has provided the necessary supplies for the fasting month of Ramadan [beginning 21 January].

Al-Sharif added that the Council approved a memorandum by the Ministry of Information that prohibits the manufacture or assembly of digital decoders for television transmission without approval from the Council of Ministers.

He added that the Council of Ministers had agreed to increase the Railway Authority's investments for the current fiscal year as well as the project to develop engineering courses at universities and vocational education. The Council also agreed to increase investments in elementary education.

'Terrorists' Killed in Battle With Security Forces

NC2112073995 Cairo MENA in Arabic
2310 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 20 Dec (MENA)—Two terrorists were killed in an exchange of gunfire with the security forces at a hideout among the grape vineyards in the village of Marzuq in Markaz Matay, al-Minya Governorate, Upper Egypt.

An official source in the Ministry of Interior said that information available to the security agencies indicated that terrorist elements involved in recent security incidents in al-Minya were using vineyards as hideouts. After taking the necessary measures, forces from the al-Minya Security Directorate and State Security Forces supported by the central security forces surrounded the vineyards.

The forces came under fire from the plantations and had to return the fire. A search yielded the bodies of two terrorists, Sa'd Muhammad Sa'd, a 25-year-old active terrorist and another terrorist whose identity has not been identified as yet. A Hulwan pistol was found on the first body and a Beretta was found on the second.

According to the official source, terrorist Sa'd was involved in several assaults against policemen, including the assault on the Matay prosecutor and assistant chief detective last November, the murder of Sergeant Muhammad 'Abd-al-Fattah 'Abd-al-Mun'im of the Samalut traffic station in October, and the murder of noncommissioned officer Zarif Mahfuz 'Abdallah of al-Minya Security Directorate last June.

The source noted that experts from the criminology laboratory went to the site of the incident to lift fingerprints off the unidentified terrorist. The prosecution has been notified to launch an investigation.

Trains Collide on Cairo-Asyut Railway Line

NC2112090995 Cairo MENA in Arabic
0855 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Al-Jizah, 21 Dec (MENA)—Two trains collided this morning at the al-Badrashayn intersection south of Giza on the Cairo-Asyut railway line.

Many persons were killed and injured in the collision. The injured were taken to al-Hawamidiyah and al-Badrasahyn hospitals for treatment and civil defense and fire department teams are counting the toll of deaths and injuries.

The collision was caused by the heavy fog and lack of visibility. The front coach of the train coming from Cairo hit the rear of another train stopped at al-Badrashayn station.

60 Dead, 150 Injured

NC2112115195 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1140 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 21 Dec (MENA)— The toll of the train collision that occurred earlier today at the al-Badrashayn intersection has risen to 60 dead and 150 injured so far.

This was stated by an official source at the Ministry of Interior.

Libya

Yemen's Salih Phones al-Qadhdhafi About Eritrea

LD2012213195 Tripoli Libyan Television Network in Arabic 2000 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih of brotherly Yemen has made a telephone call to the brother leader of the revolution [Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi], during which he briefed the brother leader on Eritrea's occupation of the Yemeni island of Greater Hanish unexpectedly and the capturing of Yemeni soldiers who were not in a state of readiness. The brother leader of the revolution and President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih expressed their regret at the incident between the two brotherly states in view of Eritrea's Arab origin, although it had not joined the Arab League.

During the call, President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih expressed his surprise at the action taken by Eritrea as it constituted a dangerous adventure, stressing that Yemen had exercised self-restraint despite its commitment to its rights to the island of Greater Hanish.

GCC Head on Resolving Border Disputes

LD1912165895 Riyadh SPA in English
1246 GMT 19 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Sharjah, the United Arab Emirates, Dec 19, SPA — Shaykh Fahim Bin Sultan al-Qasimi, the secretary general of the Gulf Cooperation Council has affirmed that there are bilateral contacts between the Council's member states to resolve border disputes in the light of Bahrain summit's resolutions through cordial means.

In an interview with the Arabic language AL-SHARUQ magazine published in the UAE and transmitted by the QATARI NEWS AGENCY yesterday, Shaykh al-Qasimi said there had been some moves among the member states to reach final solutions for the border disputes. 'Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have signed the final maps for the demarcation of their borders. Moreover, there have been some contacts by Saudi Arabia with the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait in the same context,' Shaykh al-Qasimi noted.

He affirmed strongly the importance of unity and cohesion between the GCC states, especially at this current juncture which is witnessing international, political and economic groupings.

Shaykh al-Qasimi expressed optimism over the growth process of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

He affirmed the right of the UAE to get back its three occupied islands and said the GCC states fully endorsed and supported the UAE right in this context.

Shaykh al-Qasimi noted the stands of the GCC states to support the Middle East peace process and said the Arabian territorial rights should be restored to the Arabs including al-Quds and the Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights and the southern Lebanon.

He called on Iraq to comply with the United Nations resolutions for the lifting of the economic embargo on it.

Shaykh al-Qasimi said the GCC people are fully aware of the suffering of the Iraqi people, adding that the lifting of the economic embargo is in the hands of the Iraqi ruling regime.

Kuwait

Official Comments on Damascus Declaration

NC2112112895 Cairo MENA in English
1100 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo Dec 21 (MENA)—The Damascus Declaration is not a third body between the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab League, Sulayman Majid al-Shahin, Kuwaiti foreign undersecretary said.

Damascus Declaration constitutes a nucleus for a better Arab future, al-Shahin said at a news conference last night.

He lauded the futuristic outlook expressed in the Egyptian document on the Damascus Declaration, with a particular focus on proposals to improve inter-Arab ties and amend the Arab League charter.

Member states of the GCC along with Egypt and Syria have identical views concerning the Damascus Declaration, he said.

He voiced hope that participants in the December 27 meeting of the Damascus Declaration, to be held in Damascus, will approve the Egyptian document.

On his meeting with Arab League Secretary General Dr. 'Ismat 'Abd-al-Majid, al-Shahin said he briefed the secretary general on some points related to the latest statement of the GCC leaders, issued in Muscat, and the forthcoming Damascus Declaration meeting.

The question of Kuwaiti POW's and MIA's and Afro-cooperation were also tackled at the meeting, he told reporters.

The Kuwaiti official said differences in viewpoints were behind the resignation of the Kuwaiti foreign minister, which lasted for a few hours only.

Al-Shahin said inter-Kuwaiti disagreements on the question of resuming diplomatic ties with Jordan are only related to timing. Kuwait wants Jordan to clearly condemn the concept of aggression as a way of solving Arab-Arab problems, he said.

While renewing Kuwait's opposition to partitioning of Iraq, al- Shahin called upon Iraq anew to comply with the Gulf war-related UN Security Council resolutions.

Dismissing Kuwaiti-Saudi border disputes, the Kuwaiti official said that the two sides have solved their border problem some years ago.

Qatar

Representatives Attend GCC Technology Meeting

MM2112103695 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic
21 Dec 95 p 7

[Report by Sulayman Nimr: "Qatar Participates in GCC Technical Military Meeting"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Riyadh — It has been learned from a Gulf diplomatic source that Qatar participated in the meetings of a military technical committee of the

Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC], held in Riyadh two days ago.

The source pointed out that two senior Qatari officers, who are members of a Gulf military technical committee, participated in meetings held by the committee, whose task is to work to expand the warning communication system linking the operational command centers in the GCC armies.

The committee held its meetings in Riyadh with representatives of seven international companies specializing in military communication projects, with a view to presenting the project to them to enable them to submit their bid within three months at the latest.

The costs of the military communication and warning project are estimated at some $30 million. The recent Muscat Gulf summit endorsed the project, which the GCC defense ministers had agreed to set up to guarantee direct communication among the operations rooms of the armies of the six GCC states. [passage omitted]

Saudi Arabia

Opposition Rejects 'Western, Eastern' Support

MM2012154695 London AL-SHAR'IYAH in Arabic Dec 95 p 2

[Unattributed article under the rubric "From the Editor"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The statistics compiled by the U.S. Embassy in the Kingdom [of Saudi Arabia] under commercial cover, published by the magazine NEWSWEEK on 18 November, revealed a fact that has surprised the Americans: The great majority of the people of the peninsula insist on adhering to Islam as a religion and a law. They also insist on renouncing dictatorship and demanding political participation. There is no contradiction in this connection, because adherence to the Shari'ah is in fact a rejection of dictatorship. But do Westerners learn?

Applying the Islamic Shari'ah sincerely and equally and guaranteeing the nation's right to choose, judge, and replace its rulers are the main aims for which the Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights [CDLR] was established and for the sake of which it is struggling through written words and good preaching to enlighten citizens about their rights and duties and warn the rulers against persisting in their oppression and tyranny. This includes revealing grievances, defending the oppressed, exposing widespread corruption, promoting virtue, and repudiating vice, whatever the price in terms of money and lives.

The CDLR does not believe in Western or Eastern support. It believes in effective action, and productive action should come from the nation itself. Any plan for change must emanate from within, through the sons of Muslim society. As for the cheap imported solutions imposed by the East or the West, they disappear and dissolve easily just as they come easily.

What the West and the East should know is that the Arabian Peninsula is the peninsula of Islam and it will accept nothing other than Islam, and the change in this peninsula will be imposed by the nation against the will of the enemies of Islam.

United Arab Emirates

Foreign Minister Receives Christopher's Message

JN2012153695 Manama WAKH in Arabic 1115 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Abu Dhabi, 20 Dec (WAKH) — Rashid 'Abdallah, foreign minister of the United Arab Emirates [UAE], has received a written message from U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher dealing with relations of cooperation between the two countries and issues of mutual concern.

The message was delivered by David Litt, U.S. ambassador to the UAE, during a meeting with Rashid 'Abdallah in Abu Dhabi today. The two sides discussed the current developments in the region and international issues of concern to the two countries.

'Arafat Visits, Promised $25 Million in Aid

JN2112093895 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 0600 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] His Excellency President Yasir 'Arafat held a meeting with Shaykh Zayid Bin-Sultan Al Nuhayyan, president of the United Arab Emirates [UAE], in Abu Dhabi last night. The talks addressed the means to promote Palestinian-UAE ties, Arab solidarity, and developments in the peace process in light of the handover of Palestinian cities in the northern West Bank to the National Authority.

Shaykh Zayid hosted a dinner banquet in honor of His Excellency President Yasir 'Arafat. The Arab and foreign ambassadors accredited to the UAE attended.

The EMIRATES NEWS AGENCY reported that Abu Dhabi pledged to contribute $25 million to the [Palestinian] National Authority as part of international aid. The agency added that UAE President Shaykh Zayid Bin-Sultan Al Nuhayyan reiterated his country's support for the international efforts under way to find a just solution to the Palestine question and promote the peace process.

Announces Joint Cooperation Committee

JN2112100995 Manama WAKH in Arabic 0610 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Abu Dhabi, 21 Dec (WAKH) — Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat has said that His Highness Shaykh Zayid Bin-Sultan Al Nuhayyan, president of the United Arab Emirates [UAE], decided to form a permanent joint committee between the UAE and the Palestinian National Authority [PNA] to pursue cooperation between the two sides.

At a news conference last night, President 'Arafat said the UAE will later appoint someone to head this committee on its behalf. It was decided that the Palestinian side to the committee will be headed by Mahmud 'Abbas, alias Abu-Mazin, member of the PLO Executive Committee.

President 'Arafat said Shaykh Zayid expressed full readiness, as always, to support the Palestinian people, whose country was destroyed by the occupation. He said: The infrastructure was completely destroyed, as attested by all international observers.

Asked if a mechanism has been reached to implement the appeal made by Shaykh Zayid for Arab reconciliation and solidarity, the Palestinian president said the issue of reconciliation will be part of the committee's duties. This issue will be presented to the Arab League and to Arab leaders. President 'Arafat said he has been following this issue very carefully.

The Palestinian president asserted that the PNA is a prelude to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. He said that male and female prisoners will be released very shortly before the Palestinian elections on 20 January.

President 'Arafat added that around 11 parties and organizations have decided to take part in the upcoming elections, including three Islamic parties that registered their names with the Palestinian Interior Ministry. The PNA is talking to all factions and organizations, including the Hamas [Islamic Resistance] Movement.

President 'Arafat said the PNA is an arm of the PLO. This is why the PLO Executive Committee decided that its chairman will be the PNA president. He added that the Executive Committee continues its work because it represents 7.5 million Palestinians inside and outside the territories, including 3.5 million people outside the territories.

The PNA president said the Palestinian state is coming. What is taking place now is laying the foundations of this state. He also stressed the PNA's commitment to the resolutions of the Palestine National Council on setting up a confederation with Jordan at the appropriate time.

Yemen

$80-Million Loan Agreement Signed With World Bank

JN2112073595 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0430 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The Republic of Yemen has reached a comprehensive agreement with the World Bank under which the latter will extend to our country an $80 million-loan to support economic, financial, monetary, and institutional reforms for the year 1996. The loan represents international backing for our country's measures, programs, and reforms which will boost our country's relations with world governments and organizations which support economic and social development in our country. [passage omitted]

Jordan's King Said Aiming at 'Overthrowing' Saddam

NC2012154795 (Clandestine) Voice of Iraqi People in Arabic 1500 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] According to Egyptian press sources today, King Husayn of Jordan has relinquished his pro-Iraqi-regime position and started to adopt serious stances aimed at overthrowing Saddam Husayn.

The Egyptian press sources stressed that Jordan's recent positions on the Baghdad regime are all focused on terminating the dictatorial rule in Iraq. The sources said that King Husayn is trying hard to win the support of the Gulf states and other states that support terminating Saddam Husayn's regime and replacing it with a democratic regime.

The Egyptian magazine SABAH AL-KHAYR stressed that King Husayn knows many secrets about the Baghdad regime. This, the magazine added, strengthens King Husayn's recent stances, primarily his call to Iraqi opposition leaders to meet in Amman.

'Aziz Holds Talks With French Officials in Paris

Meets Foreign Minister

JN2012193695 Baghdad Iraq Television Network in Arabic 1800 GMT 20 Dec 95

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Text] French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette received Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq 'Aziz today. He then hosted a luncheon in his honor.

Following the meeting, Tariq 'Aziz expressed satisfaction with his meeting with the French foreign minister, describing it as frank and constructive. He said that the talks dealt in particular with relations between Iraq and the UN Security Council.

He added that he briefed the French minister on Iraq's stand and stressed to him the continued cooperation with the UN Special Commission. He noted that there is pressure from other sides to postpone the results of the Ekeus commission. He said that this is a source of concern to Iraq.

He added that he briefed the French side on Iraq's viewpoint on UN Security Resolution 986, and that he listened carefully to the French Government's viewpoint.

Tariq 'Aziz is expected to meet with French Prime Minister Alain Juppe later today.

Meets Prime Minister Juppe

JN2112101895 Baghdad INA in Arabic 0940 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Paris, 21 Dec (INA) — Deputy Prime Minister Tariq 'Aziz met here yesterday evening with French Prime Minister Alain Juppe.

After the meeting, Tariq 'Aziz told reporters he discussed with Juppe the situation at the Security Council and Iraq's position, as well as what Iraq has done and is planning to do. He added that the meeting was cordial and that he is satisfied with it. [passage omitted]

Arms Deal Reportedly Reached With Russia

NC2012161995 (Clandestine) Voice of Iraqi People in Arabic 1500 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Knowledgeable Jordanian sources have revealed further details about the military hardware consignment of ballistic missiles seized recently in Amman en route to Baghdad.

The sources pointed out that the $25-million consignment was imported from Russia by Iraqi businessman 'Udayy 'Ujam. He resides in Jordan and operates on the instructions of Saddam's son 'Udayy. 'Ujam works with another businessman, Palestinian Wi'am Abu-Gharbiyah, who is known for his close ties with Saddam's regime. [passage omitted]

According to information from Baghdad, the ruling regime has instructed its businessmen and merchants who have business dealings with the Jordanian market to cease their dealings and switch their businesses to Turkey. The regime is trying to change the (Faydah) area, which is located between Mosul and Zakho, into a free trade zone, since there is no UN supervision there.

Information Minister Receives Russian Envoy

JN2012145595 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1320 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 20 Dec (INA)—Culture and Information Minister Hamid Yusuf Hammadi received Russian Ambassador in Baghdad Nikolay Kartuzov today.

Saddam Husayn Issues People's Councils Law

JN2012154295 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1305 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Baghdad, 20 Dec (INA)—President Saddam Husayn today issued the People's Councils law which was approved by the National Assembly and the Revolution Command Council. [passage omitted]

Government Rejects Withdrawal to '67 Borders

TA2112110895 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 21 Dec 95 p A2

[Report by Aluf Ben]

[FBIS Translated Text] "Israel should strive not to make any declarations about the border with Syria before the nature of the peace, normalization, and demilitarization are clarified," it was agreed this week in a meeting of the Foreign Ministry's directorate chaired by Deputy Foreign Minister Eli Dayan.

Career ministry officials said Israel should abstain from making any declarations recognizing Syria's sovereignty on the Golan, seeing that this would denote a total withdrawal before the payoff for Israel is clear.

The officials noted that there is no way Israel could agree to a withdrawal to the 4 June 1967 borders, both because they are not based on international law and because agreeing to such a withdrawal would bring the Syrians to the edge of Lake Tiberias and entail granting them fishing rights and access to the lake's water.

Another assessment made in the meeting was that there is no chance that the Israeli people will agree to a withdrawal to the 4 June 1967 borders, even if a regional peace agreement and normalization with Syria are attained. It was further noted that the international border constitutes a problem for Israel since it passes 10 meters from the edge of the lake and would leave Syria in control of the sources of the Baniyas stream. Therefore, the sources said, Israel would be well advised to propose border amendments which would ensure defensible borders and control over the water sources vital to it.

Delegation Head on Upcoming Syrian Talks

TA2012212495 Jerusalem Israel Television Channel 1 Network in Hebrew 1845 GMT 20 Dec 95

[Interview with Foreign Ministry Director General Uri Savir by Ehud Ya'ari in the studio; from the "Focus" program — live]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Ya'ari] Next week, you will sit with the Syrians somewhere near Washington. Have you ever seen a Syrian mustache from close up?

[Savir] Only on television.

[Ya'ari] Have you never met with the Syrians?

[Savir] Not face-to-face.

[Ya'ari] Incidentally, will you travel as the head of the delegation in place of Ambassador Rabinovich?

[Savir] I will head the delegation, but I will not replace Amb. Rabinovich, because the format has changed. This is a broader delegation; it is not merely ambassadors talks this time. The talks will be conducted in broader teams, and Amb. Rabinovich is a permanent and important member of the team.

[Ya'ari] Just out of curiosity: When something interesting happens in the talks, whom will you phone — the prime minister or the foreign minister?

[Savir] I will call both the foreign minister and the prime minister.

[Ya'ari] Will the Syrians change the makeup of their delegation as well?

[Savir] Yes. Their delegation will be broader and will include approximately six people. Apparently, three people — veteran diplomats — will head their delegation, with Amb. al-Mu'allim among them.

[Ya'ari] It was reported this evening that the chief of staff is opposed — at least this time around — to sending an officer on his behalf to the delegation which you are heading.

[Savir] The report was incorrect, because this is the prime minister's decision, and it has to do with the essence of the first round of talks. During the first three days, we will discuss the concept [last word in English] and the agenda. We will not discuss the security issue yet. Once the security discussion starts, a senior officer will join the talks. There will be officers in the delegation. The Syrians, too, are not sending a senior officer at this time. At this point, it is a conceptual discussion dealing with the agenda and timetable. We will still not discuss the security issues.

[Ya'ari] What would you consider a success at the end of the first two rounds of talks?

[Savir] I think a success would be the definition of a joint objective regarding the character and quality of peace; regarding how we plan to advance toward achieving this objective; and defining the format of negotiations, which will enable us to find a common language — a thing that was missing in the bilateral negotiations up to now. If we know where we are heading together and how we are going about it, we will be able to be more optimistic about having found a common basis for an agreement between Syria and Israel.

[Ya'ari] Will the Americans be in the room all the time?

[Savir] They will be in the room some of the time and will not be in the room at other times. This time, contrary to previous meetings with the Syrians, we have a flexible format: The talks will be trilateral at times and bilateral at other times; we will have three officials on each side at times and will hold tete-a- tetes at other times. We will be together for three days and nights in order to exploit the issues to the fullest and examine whether we are speaking about the same peace, the same arrangement, and the same process for serving both sides.

[Ya'ari] There are quite a few people in Israel who believe you are being sent on a very difficult mission. You are being sent to play chess with Walid al-Mu'allim, the head of the Syrian delegation, without a queen or, to use another metaphor, you are being sent to play a poker without any aces. We have paid a heavy price for returning to the talks; we have given clear hints regarding our willingness to withdraw to the international border, evacuate settlements, and possibly drop our demand for early warning stations. Do you feel comfortable with this?

[Savir] I feel that this is a heavy burden. I am not being sent to play games but rather to negotiate a new relationship with Syria in all respects and on all issues. You stressed the territorial issue, but we are also dealing with the quality of our relations: economic relations, regional relations, and the security arrangements. This is one big package, and when we achieve this end, Israel will emerge stronger and more secure.

[Ya'ari] Reading all the headlines — and the Syrians undoubtedly read them as well — one gets the impression that you are being sent to negotiate the price being demanded of Syria — and it is hoped that this price will be as steep as possible — in exchange for an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights to the international border, for example, and the evacuation of settlements. You are not being sent, however, to negotiate the depth of the withdrawal itself.

[Savir] That is incorrect. In the future, we will have to negotiate the territorial issue, among other things. So far, no serious and detailed negotiations on this issue have been held. You are correct, however, in saying that we have dealt too much with the price we may have to pay if there is an agreement. We must speak about what Israel will receive: What is the Syrian contribution to Israel in the framework of peace relations? In this respect, the most significant thing is not how to attain a peace treaty; this can be negotiated relatively easily. The main thing is how this treaty will reflect a relationship that will endure for many years, for generations.

[Ya'ari] Yehuda Har'el, a leader of the Golan Heights settlement movement and member of the Third Way movement, has asked to be allowed to ask you a question.

[Har'el, televised from an unidentified location] Following the Yom Kippur War, the Agranat Commission laid most of the responsibility on the military echelon. Are you willing to guarantee that there is only a slim chance that the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] will have to fight the Syrians and climb the Golan Heights from Lake Tiberias?

[Savir] The answer to this question must be given at the end of the negotiations rather than at the beginning. We have no clear answer. If we think there are chances of another war, there will be no agreement under such conditions. Israel will not make an agreement at all costs. Israel must compare two situations:

1. A situation in which there is no agreement. We must ask what is the probability of a war in such a situation and under what conditions would this war be fought.

2. A negotiations process in which we aim to neutralize the Syrian ability to conduct a war, its ability to surprise us, and its very desire to launch a war.

Some people thought that Egypt and the Palestinians would disappoint us. It is possible that there is a real chance that the Syrian motivation has changed in a basic way, just as the motivation in the entire region is changing. Syria has its own reasons; it is not doing us any favors, just as Egypt did not do us any favors. In that eventuality, after carefully examining the issue, we will be able to say that there are no chances that Syria will surprise Israel, as it did in 1973 when we were deployed on the Golan Heights.

[Ya'ari] Do you see any way of wrapping up the issue with a withdrawal that will not run as deep as the international border?

[Savir] I am not negotiating the issue with you now, and I do not have an answer to this. I think we will have to demand what is necessary for our security. The negotiations on the security issue and the security arrangements necessary in order to preclude any possibility of war will be conducted by the IDF and its major generals.

[Ya'ari] At least one of our chiefs of staff who met with Syrian Chief of Staff al-Shihabi in Washington presented him with an Israeli opening position that spoke about the western edge of the Golan Plateau [qav hamatzokim]. Will you go to Washington with a map that shows a similar line?

[Savir] It would be a mistake to go with maps at this stage. We are not going with any maps. We will not start the negotiations from any borderline. We are not carrying any geographic map but rather want to chart various maps, and this is an important point: We want to chart a map that deals with our relations with

Syria; a map of the Middle East the day after peace; a map of our economic relations with Syria; a map of our security arrangements with Syria; and a map of Israel's and Syria's international relations vis-a-vis the United States. When we finally have answers to these questions, we will chart the geographic territorial map. Incidentally, I believe that during these stages, the negotiations will involve a much higher level of decisionmakers.

[Ya'ari] Several minutes ago, I spoke with someone whom you know — and I will not mention his name here — who is extremely close to Syrian circles. He asked me to direct the following question to you, and I do so gladly: What does Mr. Savir think about the morning after peace? What kind of relations and what level of warmth would you like to see in Israeli-Syrian relations?

[Savir] Look, I do not like the concept of a warm peace or a cold peace. Peace is not something to be measured with a thermometer. We want a stable and durable peace. The duration and stability of peace are the important things. In this peace, therefore, we must determine standards [last word in English] that will make Syria dependent on peace — that is, it should profit from peace. I am referring to Syrian economic development, for example, and to the links between the Syrian and Israeli economies, whether in the tourism or energy spheres. What we lacked on the Egyptian track in the past was a regional structure of economic relations between various countries. Today we have a full puzzle, and Israel and Syria — and, I believe, Lebanon as well — can link up together in this puzzle. I think that when this happens, we will have a peace that can give Syrian society many advantages. It will certainly benefit the Israeli economy. Anyone who wants to violate this peace will have to pay a very dear price, and it will not be worth his while, just as it was not worthwhile for Israel's other partners to do so. Our objective is to create a dependency on peace and to make cooperation advantageous. This is the direction of the entire world in general and the Middle East in particular. I hope this will also be Syria's and Israel's direction.

[Ya'ari] Do the Syrians accept Shim'on Peres' proposal to turn the Golan Heights into a center of economic cooperation between the two countries?

[Savir] The prime minister referred to this as one of the points on which there is a conceptual [last word in English] agreement....

[Ya'ari, interrupting] With Syria?

[Savir] Yes, via the Americans. The agreement is that Syria will not oppose a situation in which the Golan Heights becomes some sort of center for economic development — perhaps by means of cooperation. This is only natural during peace.

[Ya'ari] Do you have any target date? Does your mandate, as you understand it, call upon you to at least attempt to complete the negotiations or reach a major breakthrough before the Knesset elections next year?

[Savir] I think it is a mistake to talk about target dates. We should reach a good agreement that serves Israel's interests. That is my target.

[Ya'ari] Is it essential to attain an agreement before we seriously sit with 'Arafat on the permanent arrangement? As the man who is conducting the negotiations with the Palestinians as well, would you feel more comfortable sitting with 'Arafat and the Palestinians on the permanent arrangement once the Syrians are already inside the circle of peace?

[Savir] I would not play down the centrality of the Palestinian issue. It was and still is the heart of the conflict. We will have to continue to work on it. The State of Israel can simultaneously engage in making peace with both the Palestinians and the Syrians. The ultimate goal, after we complete the peace arrangement with Syria and Lebanon, is to attain a regional structure. We have peace with Egypt and Jordan. In the process with the Palestinians, we already have the Oslo road map. We will follow the lines of this map and the timetable it set. After we conclude the talks with Syria and Lebanon in a full and true peace, we will, in fact, be closing the circle of peace. The circle of war will turn into a circle of peace, and we believe that countries such as Saudi Arabia and the North African states will join this circle when the peace accord is signed, even if the negotiations with the Palestinians are still going on. We have no intention of avoiding the negotiations on the permanent arrangement with the Palestinians.

[Ya'ari] Don't you believe — I certainly do, but I am not negotiating with anyone — that it would be more convenient to negotiate with the Palestinians once the Syrian issue is signed and sealed, the White House ceremony is behind us, and it is only us and the Palestinians sitting at the table with a tight ring of peace accords around us?

[Savir] Not necessarily. My experience with negotiations has given me a different perception of our relative power. One of the things we learned from the negotiations is how the Arabs view us. We have always seen the Arab threat. As they begin to sober up, the Arabs, to some extent, have started to see Israel's power for what it really is. Israel is considered a regional superpower. We have nothing to fear from these negotiations.

We are negotiating with the Palestinians while holding many cards in our hands. We should define what we want from the permanent arrangement and what we want from Syria. In the current state of affairs, in which every Arab party wants to profit — on the economic level and in terms of relations with the United States — we are holding some strong cards. We must define for ourselves what we want and design the map of peace. I do not care if we do this first with the Palestinians or with the Syrians; eventually, it must include both.

[Ya'ari] In that case, you may be asked: Why not let the Syrians cool off? Why are we suddenly making what appears to be a very energetic effort to return to the table? Why don't we wait and tell the Syrians: You cool off on the sidelines; we will talk to you, but if you are in no hurry, neither are we.

[Savir] What good would it do to us to let the Syrians cool off or even freeze? After all, it is a matter of political wisdom. No one is racing to the negotiations. The decision to aspire to an agreement was a carefully considered choice. I do not understand all the questions about our rushing to negotiate. Isn't 50 years of conflict enough? Five years have passed since the Madrid Conference. Isn't that enough? Today, al-Asad is speaking about peace, and Syria is speaking in positive terms. There is still more ground for Syria to cover: It must think about a Syrian Embassy in Israel and an Israeli Embassy in Syria, and it is beginning to speak in such terms. Yesterday, the Syrian foreign minister even spoke for the first time about calm in Lebanon.

[Ya'ari] For the first time.

[Savir] That is correct.

[Ya'ari] Was it agreed in advance that the Syrians would make a public statement about at least curbing the fire in Lebanon?

[Savir] No. It even went beyond what was agreed in advance. It was supposed to be quiet: a tacit agreement or, at least, a tacit understanding.

[Ya'ari] Were you surprised by the public statement?

[Savir] Yes. So, now that we have all these signs, why not take advantage of this? We have been punished for doing nothing many times in the past. If you do nothing, you take the greatest risk. I believe that with the strategy the prime minister is formulating, with the backing of the foreign minister and the entire cabinet, we will create new rules of the game based, I believe, on one thing: the desire of the Arab world to get closer to the West through us. Please note how important it is for the Syrians that the Americans be in the room, as you asked before. Americans in the room means Americans in the region. In the past, the USSR was in the region. The USSR supplied arms; today, the United States supplies food. That is the big difference.

[Ya'ari] Deputy Defense Minister Ori Or has said that if there is a very deep Syrian demilitarization, Israel may consider dropping its demand for early warning ground stations. Demilitarization today means thinned-out strips. Are you going there with the general intention of demanding demilitarization up to the Dar'a-Damascus road, for example, in the wake of which Israel would be willing to drop its demand for stationing ground monitors?

[Savir] I have already told you: The IDF will determine what is necessary for the security arrangement. The recent change is that the IDF must know beforehand the framework of peace in which the security arrangements will stand. What is the framework of peace? What is the territorial framework? What will the quality of relations be? These issues are interconnected. Once we know this, the IDF will determine what it needs, and then it will help in the negotiations to attain what is needed to prevent surprises or any Syrian impulse to attack Israel. After the security arrangements and normalization are implemented, it will not be worth Syria's while to attack Israel; it will be worth its while to maintain peace with Israel, and both parties will profit. If an agreement is not to be violated, it must be good for both sides.

[Ya'ari] I would like to examine whether one point that has been central to the negotiations has also changed. I am speaking about the possible or desired cutback in the size of the Syrian Army on Syrian land. We are speaking about an army with some 4,500 tanks in six divisions. Do you view this as a key issue?

[Savir] To me, the central issue is a total slashing of Syria's motivation to ever launch a war against us. This is made up of many elements: the security aspect, which includes numerous options; the U.S. involvement — not only in the negotiations but in the very arrangements — vis-a-vis Israel and Syria; the preservation of Israel's deterrence; and the preservation of the economic incentive. I believe we have enough power and experience to form this kind of arrangement.

[Ya'ari] Will we demand that the deployment of the Syrian Army stationed in Lebanon be changed or reduced? Today, the Syrian troop deployment reaches the red line that was determined in 1976. Will you demand that they change their deployment if we are to get off the Golan Heights?

[Savir] The issue of the Syrian presence in Lebanon will be raised. This is all I can say on this issue.

[Ya'ari] Will you consider the idea, which was raised in the past, of withdrawing from the Druze enclave on the Golan as a first stage, as this does not require the evacuation of any Israeli settlement?

[Savir] Look, we must first look at the full picture. I cannot discuss the details of the negotiations at this time. What has changed is that there is an attempt to start not with the first step — this is quite dangerous for an agreement — but to look at the end result. Is there any type of attainable target that both parties find worthy of their efforts? Once we can design the end, we can start to move forward from the beginning. How is less important.

[Ya'ari] We have a question for you from Samir Da'bush, a Druze resident of the Golan Heights who accepted Israeli citizenship and wants to stay on the Golan.

[Da'bush, by telephone from unidentified location] We know that the Jews who will leave the Golan Heights will probably receive some form of compensation. In the wake of a withdrawal, will the Druze who leave the Golan enjoy the same rights or receive other rights, and will those who stay have rights or simply become Syrian citizens again, as if nothing ever happened?

[Savir] Look, the fate of the residents or the Israelis has not been discussed yet in the negotiations, and I would not like to address this issue beyond what has already been said. At the same time, there is no doubt in my mind that there will be no distinction between Israeli citizens as part of the government's treatment...

[Ya'ari, interrupting] You mean that you will be responsible for the Druze who received Israeli citizenship?

[Savir] I am certain that the government will feel that way.

[Ya'ari] One of the questions that often come up in the public debate in Israel is the difference between the Syrian demand for a withdrawal to the 4 June 1967 lines and the international border of 1923. If we look at a schematic map of these areas, we will see the Baniyas, al-Hammah, etc. Yasir 'Arafat and the Palestinians, however, are laying claim to territory on the Golan Heights. Mr. 'Arafat has said that al-Hammah and the Baniyas are Palestinian land and should not be given to the Syrians.

[Savir] All I can tell you is that Yasir 'Arafat is not a party to these negotiations.

[Ya'ari] Did you talk to 'Arafat about these claims of his to what he calls the Palestinian Golan?

[Savir] We heard him.

[Ya'ari] Negotiations are currently being held in Cairo between 'Arafat's men and Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] representatives. Where do we stand on this as yet unsigned agreement?

[Savir] We want Hamas to change from a terror organization into a political movement. We told the Palestinians that only those who adhere to the rules of the game will be allowed to participate in the elections; those who keep shooting and dealing in terror cannot take part in the elections. Those who want to participate in the elections — and the elections have tremendous significance for Palestinian society — must put an end to violence, terror, and guns. If Hamas shifts from terror to politics, I believe we would welcome this.

[Ya'ari] Would you recommend that Israel facilitate this agreement by accepting Hamas' demands, such as the release of prisoners, through the PLO or by making an unofficial commitment not to attack, hurt, or pursue them?

[Savir] God forbid. Absolutely not. We have enough problems of our own. We would not like to become part of Palestinian politics. It would be a very grave mistake. I believe that a revolution has taken place regarding the Palestinian view of violence. What has been happening over the past few days is a development in the direction of relative democracy. There is great excitement about the elections process and relative stability on the ground. The Palestinian police are taking quite determined steps against those who attempt to wield guns. I had expected this process to take place once we stopped our objectionable control over the Palestinian people, while safeguarding the security we deem necessary, and a situation emerged in which they are masters of their own destiny. There will be more violence; these things take time. Eventually, however, they will have to put an end to violence because of their own self-interest.

This is the connection between the Palestinian and the Syrian issue. We must know how to design agreements that are not based on love. It is not a matter of trust; we have this tendency to look for hugs from the Arabs. It must be an Arab interest — Palestinian in this case and Syrian in the future — to maintain good-neighborly relations with Israel, and this is getting stronger through these processes in terms of security, economy, and peace.

[Ya'ari] Did you have any recent exchanges with 'Arafat regarding his commitment to cancel the clauses in the Palestinian Covenant in the wake of the remarks he made at Harvard and elsewhere?

[Savir] Yes. On two recent occasions — during his conversation with the prime minister and during his talk with U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher — he unequivocally reiterated his intention to convene the Palestinian National Council [PNC] two months after the elections to ratify the cancellation of the covenant. People sometimes forget that the PLO already canceled the covenant when we exchanged letters in September 1993. PLO institutions convened and canceled it. The formal ratification of the cancellation can be done through the PNC after the elections.

[Ya'ari] Did you again make it clear to him that if the clauses or the covenant are not canceled, you might take countermeasures?

[Savir] The prime minister made it unequivocally clear to him that the process will not continue before the PNC convenes to cancel the covenant. We have reason to believe this will be done, just as other things between us and the Palestinians eventually got done in spite of those who were so skeptical about the process.

[Ya'ari] Mr. Savir, people who are busy holding lengthy discussions with the Syrians will have little time for the primaries.

[Savir] That is good.

[Ya'ari] When will the shift from diplomacy to politics take place?

[Savir] At this stage, it is a shift from diplomacy to peacemaking or facilitating peacemaking, which is where I would like to stay.

[Ya'ari] Have you considered this?

[Savir] I am not thinking about this at the moment. I am focusing on one issue, which I intend to serve to the best of my ability.

[Ya'ari] Thank you, Mr. Savir.

Baraq Views Peace with Syria, Palestinians

NC2112080695 Cairo MENA in Arabic
2230 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 20 Dec (MENA)—Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq has underlined that the committee that has been formed to investigate the issue of the Egyptian POW's will discuss all issues relating to the POW's from the 1948 war to the 1973 war. He noted that Israel will notify Egypt of the results of the investigations. In a statement to the newspaper AL-AHRAM published on Thursday [21 December], Baraq says that Israel has a strategic interest in peace with Syria, and so has Syria.

Baraq noted that the talks that will be held between the two parties on 27 December will determine the line where Israel intends to withdraw on the Golan heights. He pointed out that there is a link between the depth of the withdrawal and the nature of peace as well as the degree of regional and economic cooperation and all other aspects, including a solution to the problem of terrorism and security arrangements.

Baraq expressed optimism about Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad's instructions to his negotiators to be more flexible in the upcoming talks. He noted Israel's respect for President al-Asad, the Syrian leadership, and the Syrian soldiers on the battlefield. He said that they will be good partners in peace even if the talks are not easy. Baraq refused to answer directly a question about the concept of the peace that Israel wants with Syria and the price it is asking in return. He said, however, that Israel wants a genuine, full, and open peace and that it expects the peace to include Lebanon, the Arab Maghreb countries, and the Arabian Peninsula.

Baraq ruled out the possibility of Israel freezing talks with the Palestinians in view of the current focus on the Syrian track. He noted that each track proceeds independently of any other, noting that the Syrian and Palestinian tracks do not conflict with one another, but may even help one another. Giving an example, he said that if progress is made on the Syrian track, this could prompt the Israelis to show more flexibility with the Palestinians.

Responding to a question on Jerusalem, which the Israelis assert is their eternal capital, and on what Israel has kept back for negotiations over Jerusalem for the Palestinians, Baraq said that Israel's stance is that Jerusalem is Israel's unified capital and under Israeli sovereignty. He said: We are aware that the Palestinians have different viewpoint, and they can put it forward during the negotiations. He said that Israel will give followers of all religions the right to free and safe access to the holy sites.

Sne Sees No Substitute for Golan Warning Stations

TA2112093795 Tel Aviv DAVAR RISHON in Hebrew
21 Dec 95 p 3

[Report by Arye Dayan]

[FBIS Translated Text] Health Minister Efrayim Sne stated in an interview with DAVAR RISHON yesterday that "at the moment he does not see any qualitative substitute to the early-warning stations on the Golan Heights," and that "there is no justification for a large and significant territorial concession" on the Golan if the payoff for Israel is a cold peace.

Sne believes the peace Israel should strive for with Syria must be as warm and active "at least as the peace we now have with Jordan."

Sne disagrees with U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher's prediction yesterday that the first two round of talks opening next week in Washington will yield a mutually accepted declaration of principles between Israel and Syria.

"A declaration of principles calls for an agreement on principles. To agree on principles Israel and Syria must close the gap between them with regard to the principles themselves. It seems to me that the basic gaps are too big for them to be closed in the first two rounds of talks," Sne said.

Netanyahu Proposes 'Confined Autonomy' in West Bank

TA2112094295 Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew 21 Dec 95 p 9

[Report by Yuval Peleg]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] "Confined [metuhemet] autonomy" — this is the policy to be implemented by the Likud if it returns to power.

In an election rally in Haifa yesterday, Likud Chairman Binyamin Netanyahu presented his political plan, which is based on creating security zones and establishing Jewish settlements around the cities that have been handed over to the Palestinian Authority.

Netanyahu claimed that most of the area that has already been handed over and is yet to be handed over to the PA is populated area centering in the large cities. "We will have to propose a framework for confining the danger," Netanyahu said. He claims that most of the territory of Judaea and Samaria is not populated by Arabs but is rather empty. "This coincides perfectly with the definition of security zones as stipulated in the Camp David and Oslo accords," Netanyahu said.

According to the plan to be presented by Netanyahu to the public, extensive security zones will be created in Judaea and Samaria, as well as Jewish settlements "that surround the densely populated autonomy areas." Netanyahu said that this is the only way to attain real peace with the Palestinians. "We are proposing a confined autonomy rather than a state," he said.

[Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English at 0500 GMT on 21 December adds: "Netanyahu said the transfer of West Bank towns to the PA was a fait accompli. The Likud will propose self-rule in the towns where the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] has withdrawn."]

The Likud chairman accused the Labor Party of "blatantly using Rabin's assassination for scoring political gain. This gross behavior constitutes an attempt to besmirch and silence the opposition and to ostracize the entire national camp," said Netanyahu, who was warmly received in Haifa after returning yesterday from a brief visit abroad. [passage omitted]

Illegal PA Water Drilling in Janin Protested

TA2112091995 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English 0500 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Israel has formally protested to the Palestinian Authority [PA] over the conducting of illegal drilling of wells in the Janin area. The protest was lodged during the meeting last night of the Israel-Palestinian Steering Committee in Jerusalem. The Palestinians promised to take action to stop the illegal drilling for water and agreed to dispatch joint teams to check that further violations were not taking place.

[Tel Aviv DAVAR RISHON in Hebrew on 21 December includes a page 9 report by Ran Halevi adding: "Agriculture Minister Ya'aqov Tzur expressed satisfaction with the PA officials' cooperation in the uncovering and closure of the drills. Tzur said that Israel and the Palestinians have a joint interest in restricting the scope of the drilling, because over-drilling may cause irreparable damage to both sides. Minister Tzur added that over the next few weeks a drilling site located on the mountain aquifer in the Qalqilyah and Tulkarm area will be monitored in order to ascertain that there are no deviations from the agreement."]

Shin Bet Concerned About Plans To Harm Peres

TA2112060295 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0500 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Shin Bet sources assess that extreme right-wing circles have reverted to the situation that existed prior to Rabin's assassination and that various groups are again threatening to harm ministers, especially Prime Minister Shim'on Peres. Our correspondent Yo'el Nir has learned that the information indicates that we are not dealing here only with organized groups, but also with the activity of individuals and groups of twos and threes — therefore it is difficult to keep tabs on all of them. Alongside the planning and preparation of subversive activity there is also information regarding ideological activity, including consultations with rabbis.

Uncovers Hamas Squad in Tulkarm

TA2012180995 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1700 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The Shin Bet, aided by the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] and the Israel Police, recently uncovered a 15-member Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] squad in the Tulkarm area. The members of the squad planned terror attacks against Israeli soldiers and civilians, as well as suicide attacks.

Hatim Yusuf Muhammad Ziyadah, age 24, from Jabalyah, told his Shin Bet interrogators that he was recruited by a senior Hamas member from the Gaza Strip who ordered him to establish military squads to carry out terror attacks in the West Bank. Ziyadah then recruited Wajih Muhammad Hasan al-Karim, a 22-year-old Tulkarm resident, whom he met when the two were studying at Bi'r Zayt University.

Al-Karim recruited two Tulkarm youths who set up military squads and planned several attacks. Among other things, they planned to murder a certain Israeli citizen and snatch his gun. They gathered information about his movements and even reached the area of the moshav where he lives, but their attempt failed. The squad members also admitted to planning to stab two soldiers who were manning a post at the entrance to the military government building in Tulkarm and recruit Israeli Arabs who were to provide them with Israeli identity cards.

No-Confidence Motion Over Sabbath Redeployment

TA2012134495 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1300 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] SHAS [Torah Observing Sephardim] and United Torah Jewry [UTJ] are submitting a motion of no confidence in the government over the desecration of the Sabbath during the evacuation of Qalqilyah and the work on the bypass roads in Judaea and Samaria. The National Religious Party [NRP] has already submitted its own no-confidence motion.

Our correspondent Yo'el Nir reports that, meanwhile, a Labor team met with UTJ representatives today to discuss the demands of the ultra-Orthodox sector. The parties agreed to study the demands for more housing units and classrooms, as well as to submit a proposal at the next cabinet session to establish a ministerial committee that will be tasked with dealing with the differences of opinion between archaeologists and the ultra-Orthodox sector in instances where Jewish bones are uncovered during digs. No solution to the problem of Reform conversion has been found yet.

Labor Party's Primaries Set for 17 April

TA2012195795 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1900 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Prime Minister Shim'on Peres announced this evening that the work of the inner cabinet will resume soon and that its composition will be similar to what it used to be during Yitzhaq Rabin's term. Our party affairs correspondent Yaron Deqel reports that Peres made the statement during a meeting of the Labor ministers.

The ministers decided to move up the election of the party's list of Knesset candidates; therefore, Labor primaries will be held on 17 April.

The Labor ministers agreed not to take steps against Knesset Members [MK's] Avigdor Qahalani and 'Imanu'el Zismann of the Third Way Movement — at least, not until after the Knesset approves next year's state budget in 10 days. Party Secretary General Nisim Zvili demanded that a decision in principle be made that the two will be removed from their positions on the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee and the Absorption Committee, but his demand was rejected.

Civilian Satellite To Be Developed With Germany

TA2112113995 Tel Aviv MA'ARIV in Hebrew 21 Dec 95 p 14

[Report by Alex Doron]

[FBIS Translated Text] An Israeli-German project will put into orbit a new satellite to be named David. It will be a civilian satellite that will be used to map forests, monitor floods, sea pollution, and desertification, research bird migration, and locate water sources.

An agreement to this effect was signed yesterday by DARA, the German space agency, and the Israel Space Agency. It was announced that the German firm OHB will conduct preliminary studies for the development of the satellite, while the Israeli firm Elop will outfit it with sophisticated cameras it will develop.

It will be a small satellite which will weigh up to 150 kg, and will be mounted with a very high-resolution camera. It will cruise the earth at an altitude of 600 km and circle it once every 97 minutes. Israel has developed a satellite launcher suited for such a small satellite, and several countries have evinced interest in it.

It was further learned that the satellite will serve as a basis for cooperation among the countries in the Mediterranean basin.

As for the name of the satellite, it was suggested by the Germans in order to illustrate the fact that "it is small, quick, and shrewd, just like David versus Goliath."

Czech Republic Cancels Deals To Upgrade Tanks

TA2012124895 Tel Aviv DAVAR RISHON in Hebrew 20 Dec 95 p 1

[FBIS Translated Text] The Czech parliament yesterday canceled an order for the upgrading of dozens of T-72 tanks at Israeli factories.

At the end of a lengthy and sometimes acrimonious debate, the parliament decided that the tanks would not be upgraded by the Israeli factories. The parliament also decided to cancel the plans to upgrade MiG-21 jets. The Czech Air Force had originally intended to publish a tender for the refurbishing of 24 jets.

The Czech Defense Ministry refused to report how many tanks were involved in the deal. Prevailing assessments put the minimum number at several dozen.

The Israeli factories were supposed to provide new munitions and electronic systems. The parliament ruled that "the decision that was signed with the Israeli factories has many shortcomings." It has been learned, however, that Czech factories, especially "Skoda" (which produces the cars sold under the same name in Israel), were among those demanding the cancellation of the order with the Israeli factories, so that local factories would receive the tender to upgrade the tanks.

Rand Report: Israel Could Build 70 Nuclear Bombs

TA2112130295 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 19 Dec 95 p A1

[Report by Aluf Ben]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Israel could build 70 nuclear bombs from the plutonium stockpiles in its possession. This assessment is included in a report commissioned by the U.S. Department of Defense and drafted by the Rand Institute a few weeks ago.

The Rand Institute is fully financed by the U.S. defense establishment. Last year it prepared a report for the Pentagon on the dispatch of U.S. soldiers to the Golan in the framework of a peace arrangement between Israel and Syria.

According to the report, whose contents were reported to HA'ARETZ by U.S. sources, Israel currently has 350 kg of weapons-grade plutonium produced in the Dimona nuclear reactor since 1964. The reactor continues to produce 16 kg of plutonium a year, enough to build three nuclear bombs. The authors estimate that the capacity of the Dimona reactor was 40 megawatts initially and was increased to 70 megawatts in the mid-1970's.

The Rand report deals with the proposed Fissile Material Production Cut-Off Agreement [FMPCA], the international treaty to freeze production of fissile materials (plutonium and enriched uranium) used in nuclear weapons. According to the authors, "the treaty is particularly aimed at Israel, India, and Pakistan, which are undeclared nuclear superpowers. The FMPCA suggests a new way of subjecting nuclear installations and materials to international supervision."

Analyzing the proposed treaty, its authors affirm that its purpose is not to totally halt the production of high-quality plutonium and enriched uranium but to subject materials and installations to supervision. They say the treaty will not prevent the signatory countries from building nuclear weapons within a few days from the stockpiles of plutonium that will be subject to international supervision.

Furthermore, the treaty will not limit the production and use of plutonium as fuel for nuclear reactors. The report notes that the annual amount of plutonium produced for civilian purposes by Japan, France, Britain, and Russia is enough to build 4,400 nuclear bombs. The authors fear that some of this amount might be stolen either from warehouses or during its transportation and that these dangerous materials might fall into the hands of radical regimes or terror organizations.

The report believes it will be impossible to enforce the FMPCA before 2002 and recommends that the U.S. Administration initiate a more stringent treaty that will totally ban the production of plutonium and reduce current stockpiles.

The report points out that India has enough fissile material to build 85 nuclear bombs; Pakistan could build 13 bombs; North Korea has enough material to build four to six bombs; and South Africa, which terminated its nuclear program, has enough material to build 70 bombs. The report stresses that the data refer to the potential rather than the actual number of nuclear bombs that have been built. The authors estimate that building a 1-kiloton nuclear weapon would require 5 kg of weapons-grade plutonium, 7 kg of the type of plutonium used as fuel in nuclear reactors, or 15 kg of weapons-grade enriched uranium.

The HA'ARETZ correspondent points out that Israel has not published an official position on the FMPCA, which the United States presented to it on several occasions. According to U.S. sources, U.S. President Bill Clinton raised the FMPCA issue with the late Prime Minister Yitzhaq Rabin in November 1993 and asked him whether Israel would agree to join it. Rabin explained that while the risk- laden peace process continued, he would not be able to deal with the issue. The U.S. sources told HA'ARETZ that administration officials thought at the time that India and Pakistan would agree to join the FMPCA, which was why they wanted to find out Israel's position. [passage omitted]

Al-Kabariti Voices Support to Yemeni Counterpart

JN2012142095 Amman Radio Jordan Network in Arabic 1200 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti held a telephone conversation with his Yemeni counterpart 'Abd-al-Karim al-Iryani. They discussed the political and diplomatic efforts being made to demarcate borders between Eritrea and Yemen and the standoff caused by the Eritrean military attack against al-Hanish al-Kabir island.

Al-Kabariti emphasized Jordan's support for the Yemeni efforts to settle the dispute on the basis of the agreement that was reached during Foreign Minister al-Iryani's visit to Eritrea. The accord stipulated that an agreement should be hammered out through bilateral negotiations. If such agreement is not possible, the dispute would be settled through arbitration or recourse to the International Court of Justice.

The two ministers agreed to continue consultations and coordinate efforts to settle this standoff through diplomatic and fraternal avenues.

Senate Speaker: No Plans To Mediate Yemen Crisis

JN2112100295 Amman JORDAN TIMES in English 21-22 Dec 95 pp 1, 7

[Report by Sa'idah Kilani "Special to the JORDAN TIMES"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Amman — Jordan said Wednesday it would not mediate in the Yemeni-Eritrean conflict over a Red Sea Island, but stressed its support for Yemen and expressed hopes that the conflict would be solved diplomatically.

Upper House of Parliament speaker Ahmad al-Lawzi, told the JORDAN TIMES at the end of a meeting between the Senate's foreign committee with Foreign Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti, that Jordan fully supports the Yemeni position but "there is no plan for Jordanian mediation" in the conflict.

"We hope and call for an end to the conflict diplomatically, through negotiations and in accordance with international legitimacy," Mr. al-Lawzi said. "Jordan supports its brethren in Yemen and supports a diplomatic solution between Yemen and Eritrea."

Mr. al-Lawzi said Jordan sought strong and close ties with Arab countries and was keen on maintaining cordial relations with countries, bordering it—Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Syria.

"Jordan is keen on preserving the unity of Iraq and on alleviating the suffering (of Iraqi people) through lifting" the five-year-old trade embargo on that country, Mr. al-Lawzi said. "Jordan has a vested interest in Arab unity, especially at a time when countries of the world are moving towards forming unions and blocs with other countries to safeguard their interests and unity."

"If there are any differences within Iraq, it is up to the Iraqi people to decide the correct path to follow," he added.

Spokesperson of the Islamic Action Front party at the Lower House of Parliament Hamzah Mansur described the Eritrean attack on Hanish al-Kabir island as a Zionist conspiracy and called on the House in its session on Wednesday to condemn it.

"All evidences show that this aggression has been carried out in coordination and cooperation with the Zionist state in occupied Palestine. It is a new aggression on the Arab Nation," Mr. Mansur said.

Mr. Mansur said there were some reports that indicate an agreement between Eritrea and Israel to enable the later to set up "a Zionist settlement in the Red Sea."

"This poses a danger to Yemen's security, its land, and water and maritime navigation. It is a danger on the Arab World," he said. "I call on the House to issue a statement condemning the Eritrean aggression and Zionist intervention and calling for an immediate (Eritrean) withdrawal from the Yemeni island. The statement should also show support for the Yemeni people in their stand against the Zionist conspiracy."

"I also call on the government to condemn the Eritrean aggression and support the Yemeni cause," he added.

House Speaker Sa'd Hayil Srur said that the statement could not be issued "for lack of sufficient information on the conflict," but said that the conflict should be discussed since it was accepted in principle a an issue.

Al-Kabariti Denies Inviting Iraqi Opposition

JN2112112095 Amman THE STAR in English 21-28 Dec 95 p 1

[By Hamdan al-Haj "Special to THE STAR"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Foreign Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti denied news reports that invitations have been sent to Iraqi opposition factions to attend a conference to be held in Amman in January. He stressed that such an issue was not finalized yet, and neither were the date and form of the Iraqi political activists' gathering.

Al-Kabariti confirmed, in two separate meetings with the foreign relations committees of both houses of Parliament, that Jordan's keenness to host this meeting is meant to remove the specter of internationalizing the

Iraqi opposition conference and the issue of Iraq itself. He explained that Jordan insists on an Arab solution to the Iraqi problem, otherwise its internationalization will bear negative repercussions for Jordan, Mr. al-Kabariti was quoted as saying.

Jordan's readiness to host a conference for the anti-Saddam Husayn factions has elicited mixed reactions from the Jordanian public and political figures alike. While opposition parties see the hosting of the conference as a stark interference in internal Iraqi issues serving only the interests of the United States, others believe that Jordan will be one of the most affected countries by any new developments in Iraq. They point out that some neighboring countries of Iraq have clear territorial ambitions in that country and that it is in Jordan's interest to be involved in any change in Iraq.

The latest Jordanian moves take place as Jordan and the United States consolidate their coordination efforts in backing the Iraqi opposition parties. It should also be noted that the recent steps are among a number of measures Jordan has taken to distance itself from Baghdad and improve its relations with the Gulf countries.

His Majesty King Husayn was planning to meet with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia to end a five-year-old rift between the two countries before the Saudi monarch was taken ill.

On the Kuwait front Minister al-Kabariti and Kuwait's Foreign Minister Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah had agreed to normalize relations. Shaykh Sabah's sudden resignation this week is said to have taken place over a dispute with Kuwait's Crown Prince and Prime Minister Shaykh Sa'd al-'Abdallah al-Sabah over Jordan.

The Jordanian offer to host a meeting for the Iraqi opposition in Amman comes in the wake of the recent breakthrough in Syrian-Israeli negotiations in the aftermath of last week's visit to the region by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

It now appears that the Syrian-Israeli negotiations, due to begin in Washington before the end of this month, should conclude with an agreement within three to four months. Mr. al-Kabariti told THE STAR that he expected Mr. Christopher to return to the region around 15 January. If that is the case, then final touches on the accord between Syria and Israel would be the main reason for his trip. Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres announced in Washington lately that Israel would be willing to withdraw from the Golan Heights in return for a real peace with Syria.

Mr. al-Kabariti told THE STAR that Syria and Israel seem to be prepared for an agreement and that about 60 percent of suspended issues between them have been settled. He said Israel has agreed to reach an accord with Syria before the next Israeli elections are held in November of next year.

With Syria and Israel close to concluding a peace agreement between them, the issue of Iraq will need to be addressed soon, experts told THE STAR. They expected major changes to take place on that front during 1996.

Hizballah Denies Reports on Alleged Activities

NC2012175695 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 1715 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Reports say a Hizballah leadership delegation has been visiting Tehran for several days now for consultations on regional developments. Other reports said the party is getting ready to send a delegation to Damascus to learn about the stance announced by Syrian Foreign Minister al-Shar' in Beirut on Syria's wish for calm in south Lebanon.

In a contact with our radio, Hizballah denied these reports, saying they were fabricated by Israeli radio.

Team in Damascus Studies Truce

MM2112123495 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 21 Dec 95 p 1

[Unattributed report: "Hizballah Delegation in Damascus; Possible Truce In South"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Beirut, London, AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT — The statements made by Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' in Beirut the evening before last have aroused concern in Lebanese Hizballah circles. Especially his call for "calm in southern Lebanon" and his comment that what is happening in southern Lebanon "has sometimes gone beyond acceptable limits because of the Israeli bombardment of some Lebanese villages and cities, inflicting heavy losses in terms of the lives of Lebanese civilians. As a result, the Lebanese resistance responded to this provocation by firing Katyusha rockets on north Israel."

It has been reported in Beirut that a Lebanese Hizballah leadership delegation went to Damascus yesterday to learn about al-Shar's statements from Syrian officials. Hizballah sources have said that Hizballah will not express any reaction in this connection pending Syrian clarifications. However, Lebanese sources have said that there is a tendency toward an undeclared truce in the south with the resumption of the Syrian-Israeli negotiations.

Although a Hizballah information source declined in a contact with AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Beirut to confirm or deny the reports of the dispatch of a leadership delegation to Damascus, the reports of the delegation's visit to Damascus coincided with a statement by Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, who is regarded as spiritual leader of Lebanese Hizballah, in which he said that "the resistance has rational and responsible weapons." Responding to claims that the resistance will be stripped of its arms against its will, Shaykh Fadlallah said that the resistance "will not allow anyone to strip it of its arms against its will when Islamic interests dictate that it continue to take up arms. It will sheathe and stop using its arms when it believes that Islamic interests necessitate that. It will not allow anyone to impose on it a war it does not want or a position in which it does not believe."

While there has been no official Lebanese comment on the resistance issue, Lebanese President Ilyas al-Hirawi yesterday expressed his hope that the south and western al-Biqa' — which are occupied by Israel — "will be under Lebanese legitimacy" next year.

It is worth mentioning that French sources said yesterday that Syrian Vice President 'Abd-al-Halim Khaddam discussed with French President Jacques Chirac Hizballah's possible announcement of a halt to its military operations against the Israelis in southern Lebanon during the Syrian-Israeli negotiations period.

Cabinet Stresses Solution, Coordination With Syria

NC2012203895 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 2000 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The Council of Ministers has stated that any move on the Arab-Israeli negotiating tracks must be based on reaching a comprehensive, just, and lasting solution, on which Lebanon's participation in the Madrid conference was based. The Council of Ministers stressed the coordination between Lebanon and Syria on the concurrent Lebanese and Syrian tracks.

The Council of Ministers decided to refer the case of the assassination of Shaykh Nizar al-Halabi to the Judicial Council.

'Fundamentalist' Network Said Linked to Sudan

NC2112112795 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1020 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Beirut, 21 Dec (MENA) — Lebanese security and judicial reports indicate that the investigations the judicial authorities are conducting into the Islamic fundamentalist network that perpetrated explosions and assassinations in the city of Tripoli in north Lebanon have revealed the network's connection with the Sudanese regime, which financed the terrorist network, arranged training for its members, and issued orders and instructions.

The Lebanese newspaper AL-DIYAR today says that available leads indicate that the Sudanese regime represents the foreign source of financing for the network that assassinated Shaykh Nizar al-Halabi, head of the Islamic Projects Association, in Beirut last September and carried out explosions in the city of Tripoli.

The paper says that investigations expand daily, noting that 65 persons have so far been arrested for interrogation to determine the facts about the network and whether it is associated with other networks.

Moreover, AL-NAHAR newspaper today says that Lebanese and Palestinian elements in Sidon who have backing from Sudan and another state are behind the terrorist network.

Citing official sources, the paper notes that the network includes Lebanese officials who are members of a religious group in south Lebanon. Two Palestinian officials, Munir al-Maqdah and Jamal Sulayman—who broke away from 'Arafat's leadership—carried out the operations of the terrorist network.

AL-DIYAR points out that diplomatic circles in Beirut are following the case with interest in view of information indicating Sudan's involvement in the issue. They want to find out whether there are any links between the cracked network and the network that made the attempt on President Mubarak in Addis Ababa, as well as any networks operating inside Egypt.

According to the paper, it is not yet determined whether the Lebanese Government will take diplomatic measures against Sudan and the foreign bodies associated with this network.

Security reports say that the members of the network belong to the organization "Islam League," which includes dissidents of the Wahabi sect.

The Lebanese cabinet discussed developments in investigations into the case yesterday evening, following the arrest of five suspects who confessed to the assassination of Shaykh al-Halabi for ideological reasons. The cabinet decided to refer the case to the Justice Council, the highest judicial authority in Lebanon, to try the defendants.

Lebanese television yesterday showed a video clip of four defendants as they reacted to the assassination of Shaykh al-Halabi in front of his home. The defendants admitted that they carried out the assassination and that they have no regrets about it.

Israeli Bombardment, Overflights Reported

NC2112094495 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic
0900 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Tension prevails in the areas of the south that were the target of Israeli bombardment early this morning. Israeli tanks in al-Tayyibah bombarded the old quarter of al-Qantarah, Wadi al-Hujayr, the outskirts of al-Ghanduriyah, Qa'qa'iyat al-Jisr, Frun, the al-Litani River basin, Zawtar al-Gharbiyah, and Zawtar al-Sharqiyah. The Israeli artillery in Muhaybib shelled Tulin and Qabrikha. Security sources said approximately 100 shells landed in the area. In the meantime, Israeli helicopters flew over the area and strafed the Wadi al-Hujayr area and 'Atshit.

A resistance group from the Amal Movement released a statement today saying that it had clashed with an Israeli patrol in Wadi al-Hujayr, inflicting five casualties. It said that another group attacked the militia [South Lebanese Army, SLA] posts in 'Alman and al-Qusayr, causing losses.

The Islamic Resistance this morning attacked agent [SLA] posts in Sujud and Dayr kallab, inflicting casualties on them. The Resistance sources said that this morning the Israeli forces bombarded the Iqlim al-Tuffah heights and hills, particularly al-Jabal al-Rafi', Habbush area, 'Arab Salim, and al-Wadi al-Akhdar. The attacks were accompanied by overflights by Israeli military aircraft over al-Nabatiyah and Iqlim al-Tuffah.

IDF Kills 3 'Terrorists' in Security Zone

TA2112111995 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew
1100 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The IDF [Israel Defense Forces] spokesman reports that three terrorists were killed in south Lebanon last night. Security sources in Marj 'Uyun told correspondents that four terrorists were killed in the incident. Our correspondent Karmela Menashe reports that an IDF [Israel Defense Forces] unit operating in the eastern sector of the security zone spotted a terrorist squad on its way to plant explosive charges. The soldiers opened fire and killed the terrorists, members of the Shiite Amal organization.

Two explosive charges were discovered in searches carried out by SLA [South Lebanese Army] soldiers in the area this morning.

Khaddam on 'Understanding' With France on Lebanon

MM2112113495 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 21 Dec 95 pp 1, 6

[Report by Randah Taqiyy-al-Din]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Paris — Syrian Vice President 'Abd-al-Halim Khaddam has stressed that Syria and France, which he is visiting, have a common understanding in the interests of Lebanon and its right to recover its health and role.

Khaddam was speaking to AL-HAYAH on Tuesday [19 December] evening following a meeting with French Prime Minister Alan Juppe. [passage omitted]

Khaddam said that his and Juppe's views were identical on all the issues they discussed, namely the Middle East, the peace process, the Barcelona conference, the international situation, and bilateral relations.

Khaddam went on to say that the discussions focused also on "developments in the situation in Lebanon; the positive aspects of this situation; Syria's and France's wish for stability, progress, and rebuilding to continue in that country; and the hope that Lebanon will recover its full role in the region in all spheres."

He added: "There is a common understanding between France and Syria which serves Lebanon's interests and stresses the need for Lebanon to recover its health fully and for the national accord march and political life to be reinforced in the interests of the Lebanese people."

Juppe told AL-HAYAH: "We have not changed our position on Lebanon. This is what I said to the Syrian vice president. We understand that there are special relations between Beirut and Damascus, but we are always interested in Lebanon's sovereignty and independence."

He added that the Syrian and French sides are agreed on "the need to persuade Iraq to comply with the Security Council resolutions so that it can return to the international community gradually."

On the new dispute with Turkey over the distribution of the Euphrates waters, Khaddam said: "We are concerned over the water policy pursued by Turkey. And we hope that the Arab meeting (Arab League meeting) will help to persuade the Turkish Government to pursue a policy that protects the interests of the countries sharing the Euphrates (Syria, Turkey, and Iraq)."

Khaddam and Juppe also broached the peace process. The French prime minister said: "I believe that progress is possible in the coming weeks or months. At least we hope so."

Juppe, who stressed the importance of relations with Syria, admitted that the economic aspect of these relations "is not good, because our status in Syria has declined for some years, and we are seeking to give a new impetus to these relations." Juppe did not forget to remind his guest of the need to resolve the issue of the Syrian debts owed to France. However, he displayed an open-minded approach to resolving it, saying: "With some imagination a solution can be found."

AL-BA'TH on Resumption of Talks, Proposals

JN2112095195 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 0550 GMT 21 Dec 95

[From the press review]

[FBIS Translated Text] In its editorial under the headline "An Exceptional Opportunity," AL-BA'TH says: In a few days, peace talks on the Syrian-Israeli track will resume near Washington under U.S. sponsorship and with its full participation. The resumption of the talks on 27 December has its reasons. The halt and stalemate of the talks also had their reasons.

AL-BA'TH says the halt in the talks was not caused by Syria. It was the result of an intentional decision by Rabin, who thought then that what he had achieved in the corridors of Oslo and Wadi al-'Arabah was enough and that he could do without the Syrian and Lebanese tracks until after the Israeli elections. This is why he placed one obstacle after another and created problems in an unreasonable, aggressive, and provocative manner to Syria. This caused a stalemate in the talks.

AL-BA'TH adds: Syria is serious, and has never been hesitant about its strategic option to achieve peace, based on the resolutions of international legitimacy. This is why Syria wants to reach true peace without any delay. Peace, however, needs two parties. The Israeli side sought to impose impossible conditions, dictate its will, disregard the interests of others, and narrow the options available to the other side. It did this by limiting the issues it wants to raise in the talks and by delaying or bringing forward certain elements of the talks and deeming this its right alone.

AL-BA'TH goes on: Syria has no complex or reason not to place the peace process on the right track. Syria does not create obstacles. The cause of the halt is the other side, and not Syria. A just and comprehensive peace has been a firm objective for Syria. Syria found that most ideas and views conveyed by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher during his recent tour to Damascus from Shim'on Peres, head of the Israeli Government, contain appropriate trends for the resumption of the talks. Syria wants to give the Peres government a chance to remove the mines Israel had planted earlier on the path of the peace initiative. The Rabin government earlier derailed the peace process.

AL-BA'TH adds: When Peres puts forward rational and realistic ideas and visions, then he is dealing objectively with solid facts and realities on this track. What could make Peres' plans succeed is that they show understanding of Syria's interest in peace and that a flexible approach in the format of the talks will be followed, whereby all issues will be discussed at the same time. This is what Syria has always called for. Syria warned against dividing issues in the peace process and said that the security of one party should not be achieved at the expense of that of another. Also, the interests of one party should not be placed above those of others.

The newspaper concludes: Today, there is an opportunity to come nearer to the Syrian stance and to set things right. Syria must welcome this development. It is legitimate to say that if the Peres government implements its ideas that are in harmony with the essence of the peace process and removes the obstacles that stalemated the peace talks, then there will be great hope that the resumption of the talks on 27 December and the following intensive rounds will yield profound and positive results. These results will provide an exceptional opportunity that could lead to achieving a just, comprehensive, and viable peace in the region.

Commentary Urges Israel's 'Quick Withdrawal'

JN2012162195 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1230 GMT 20 Dec 95

[Station commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] Dear listeners: Nobody can belittle Syria's peace credibility. Syria went to the Madrid conference because it wanted peace, held negotiations through its ambassador and its chief of staff because it wanted peace, and has recently welcomed the positive spirit of the statements and positions of the new Israeli prime minister because it wants peace. Syria is also very eager not to miss any opportunity that would lead to a true peace in the region.

The peace process has stumbled over the past four years because of Israel's stand and because of the Israeli Government's concept of the desired peace. The peace that Syria wants is the peace of international legitimacy based on the Security Council resolutions and the U.S. initiative—a just and comprehensive peace that will restore rights. Such a peace means ending the occupation and its symbols in form and substance. So withdrawing occupation forces to the border that existed before the aggression and occupation, and then eliminating all the consequences of occupation, are the essence of peace.

By linking peace to its bases and principles that are recognized by the world community, Syria only seeks the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace. But when Israel tried to circumvent these bases and principles, the peace process stumbled and froze. Now that Israel has approached the essence of peace, there is a real opportunity to make the peace process successful. But any success remains dependent on concrete steps and Israel's readiness to seize this opportunity in the right way.

Syria has always been serious and interested in achieving a just and comprehensive peace in the region as soon as possible. This requires a true commitment to the peace principles and requirements. Syria has always stuck to them and has declared its readiness to meet the objective principles of peace. Therefore, Israel should work seriously to achieve substantial progress, which means, among other things, a withdrawal to the 4 June border and from entire southern Lebanon.

Quick withdrawal means imminent peace. Previous experience has proved that hesitation and procrastination do not serve peace. On the contrary, they weaken the possibility of achieving it. Syria positively received the views and proposals that were brought by the U.S. secretary of state during his recent tour, because it wanted to promote the peace process and quickly achieve its desired objective.

The issue, however, remains dependent on the extent of Israel's commitment to the bases and principles of a just and comprehensive peace. The desired peace means taking every concrete, tangible measure. Syria hopes that Israel's future deeds will be in harmony with the recent positive signals of the Israeli Government, and also with the bases and requirements of a just and comprehensive peace.

Afghanistan

Rabbani Urges Supporters of Taleban To Abandon Group

LD2012203195 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] In his speech delivered today in the Shah-e Doshamshera grand mosque [in Kabul], esteemed professor Borhanoddin Rabbani, president of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, asked all Muslim people who have taken part for one day in the jihad to abandon the rank of the mercenary Taleban and do not allow them to commit atrocities, destruction, and massacre of our people any more.

Esteemed president took part this morning in the reopening ceremony of the Shah-e Doshamshera grand mosque and delivered a detailed speech. He said:

Mosques are very important in Islam and in the life of Muslims and are the headquarters of Muslims' leadership. Those who take part in the construction of mosques and worship places hold special place and prestige before Almighty God.

Esteemed president added: Mosques are the centers of enlightenment and training of the Muslims. From these centers struggle can be launched against all social diseases and anti-Islamic phenomenon. The crimes committed by the Taleban group can be exposed from these centers.

In regard to the actions of the so-called Taleban who by the instruction of foreigners and enemies of Islam and under the sacred name of Taleb-ol-Alem [student of religious science] are embarking on conspiracy [word indistinct] against the Islamic sovereignty and destroy mosques and holy places and kill the innocent people, esteemed professor Borhanoddin said:

The person who has attended a mosque or a religious school, even for one day, can never embark on such an un-Islamic action.

Our president called on all ulema [religious scholars] and preachers to condemn from the pulpit of mosques the un-Islamic and inhumane actions of our people's enemies and to expose their crimes. [passage omitted]

Pakistani Senator on Foreign 'Intervention'

LD1512205595 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Pashto 1230 GMT 15 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Dear listeners, today we are broadcasting a portion of an interview with Mr. Sayd Jawad Hadi, member of Pakistan's Senate and chairman of the political committee of Pakistan's Jaferi [Shiite] Movement.

Regarding Afghanistan, we put this question to Sayd Jawad Hadi:

None of the plans of Mr. Mahmoud Mestiri, the UN secretary general's special envoy for Afghanistan, have as yet succeeded. What is your view on the future of the Afghanistan crisis? Do you think the United Nations should continue its endeavors? In your view, how can the problem of Afghanistan be solved?

[Begin Hadi recording] In my view, if the United Nations, America, Russia, or any other power wants to solve the Afghanistan issue, obviously they will consider their own interest first rather than the interest of Afghanistan or its people. The Afghanistan issue is impossible to solve because of intervention by foreign powers. It is necessary that the Jihadi forces and national and political forces in Afghanistan come together and solve the issue among themselves, in the interests of Afghanistan's people and independence. They should try not to lose the honor and prestige that they have gained as a result of the jihad. Fighting would not solve the issue. It will finally be solved by talks and understanding.

Because of foreign intervention, the problem in Afghanistan is absolutely impossible to solve. Only the people of Afghanistan and the political and jihadi forces in Afghanistan can solve this problem. They should not delay their efforts and should not allow Afghanistan to be totally devastated economically and politically. [end recording]

Borujerdi on Iran's Role in Reconstruction

LD2112095895 Tehran IRNA in English 0911 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Bamian, Dec. 21, IRNA — The Islamic Republic of Iran will play an active role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, the visiting Iranian deputy foreign minister for Asia and Pacific 'Ala'eddin Borujerdi announced here Wednesday.

Borujerdi, who was speaking to a group of local inhabitants at Jame' mosque here on the auspicious occasion of Mab'ath (the appointment of the prophet (s) as the last messenger to the mankind), said that the Islamic Republic of Iran, in line with its humanitarian objectives, was determined to convince Afghan belligerent parties to establish a permanent peace in Afghanistan.

He thanked Bamian residents for their bravery and resistance and lauded Secretary General of the Wahdat [Unity] Party martyr Mazari as the outstanding leader of Shia Muslims in Afghanistan.

The people who gathered in the mosque called on Iran to continue talks with the belligerent Afghan parties in order to halt war in their country.

Earlier, head of the public relations committee of the Wahdat Party Central Council Hojjat ol-Eslam Moballegh thanked Iran for its efforts aimed at establishing social justice among all Afghan factions and groups, underlining that people in Afghan Hezareh district were for restoration of their rights through negotiations and political means, withouth resorting to war and bloodshed.

Head of the Wahdat Party Central Council 'Abdolkarim Khalili was also present in the gathering.

Taleban Said To Force Youths to Battlefront

LD2012220595 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Benazir Bhutto's Taleban forcibly dispatches the youths from Herat Province to the battlefront.

Reports received by BAKHTAR say that the Taleban group forcibly takes youths out of their houses and sends them to the front in Maydan Shahr and Logar Province.

According to eyewitnesses, the number of youths who escape to Iran has recently increased.

Taleban Forces Rocket, Shell Kabul Area

Rocket Attack Kills 8

LD2012163695 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Last night and this morning rocket attacks were launched against residential areas of Kabul; eight people were martyred in the attacks. A BAKHTAR correspondent reports that Benazir Bhutto's Taleban fired 19 rockets into Kabul over the past 24 hours. As a result eight Kabul residents were martyred and 15 others injured. In Pol-e Sorkh [west of Kabul] alone, six people were martyred and 10 injured in the rocket incident. The rocket attack also caused much damage to residences.

Air Force bombers carried out several attacks on the Taleban concentration and fortifications at Talemi Markaz in Chahar Asiab after the Taleban launched their rocket attacks. As a result heavy loss of life was inflicted on them. No information has been received on the precise number of casualties.

25 Civilian Casualties

LD2112082895 Tehran IRNA in English 0812 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kabul, Dec. 21, IRNA — Twenty-five civilians were killed or wounded in west of Kabul due to the shelling of the area by the Taleban.

Announcing this, Afzali, head of the cultural committee of the Islamic Unity Party of Afghanistan said Wednesday that seven persons including three children lost their lives and at least 18 people were wounded.

Also several housing units in west of Kabul, most of whose residents are Shia Muslims, were destroyed or damaged, he said.

Afzali added that the western areas of Kabul have sustained considerable damage during the past three and a half years with more than half being demolished. With the Taleban being stationed in the vicinity of the capital city recently, the area is under long-range artillery fire every day.

The Taleban who have positioned in southern and western suburbs of Kabul have fired thousands of rockets on the city making hundreds of families homeless while causing human casualties.

Seven rockets were launched on the central areas of Kabul Wednesday, inflicting damage.

Meanwhile, celebrations were held in various mosques as well as religious and cultural centers in the capital and other cities of Afghanistan on the occasion of Mab'ath (December 20, the divine appointment of Hadhrat Mohammadd (PBUH) as the last messenger to the mankind) amid artillery and mortar fire.

Head of the supreme supervising council of Islamic Unity Party Ayatollah Fazel, delivering a speech in a ceremony on the same occasion, supported the peace-seeking measures taken to settle crisis in Afghanistan and attempts which stressed cooperation of all groups and factions in the political and social life of the country.

He assured that his party will stand against any move which aggravates disputes and negates the rights of certain parties and factions.

Ayatollah Fazel also praised Iran's efforts aimed at establishing a comprehensive peace in the country and termed such measures as humanitarian, Islamic and benevolent.

Khenjan 'Calm' After Assault by Dostam's Troops

LD2012145395 Tehran IRNA in English 1400 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kabul, Dec. 20, IRNA — The Khenjan region in the northern Salang pass in the Afghan province of Baghlan, is reportedly calm since midnight following heavy armed clashes between government troops and forces under command of General 'Abdol Rashid Dostam.

The Afghan Defence Ministry in its statement announced that the Dostam's 'Jonbesh-e Melli-e Eslami' (National Islamic Movement), launched a ground assault aided by heavy artillery fire Monday afternoon against positions of government troops on the eastern side of the highway linking Kabul with Central Asia and the Khenjan region.

It said that after eight hours of fighting the attacking forces suffered heavy damage and casualties. The [word indistinct] gave no details on the exact casualty figures on either side.

There is a lull in the region following the Monday battle in Khenjan which occurred after a four-month unofficial ceasefire.

Kabul-Based Shiite Leader Warns Against 'Plots'

LD2112100695 Tehran IRNA in English 0944 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kabul, Dec. 21, IRNA — The U.S. and its lackies are constantly hatching plots against the Islamic revolution in Afghanistan, an Afghan party leader said here on Wednesday, urging Afghan people to stand against such conspiracies.

Hojjat ol-Eslam Mohammad Akbari, head of the Central Council of a faction of Afghanistan's Islamic Unity Party, added that a number of internal and external factors are behind the continuation of crisis in Afghanistan. He also said that foreign hands were involved in all problems created for Afghan people. Meanwhile, Akbari criticized leaders of Afghan jihad groups and noted that when they failed to reach a compromise with each other, clashes would intensify.

According to Hojjat ol-Eslam Akbari, all Afghan parties and ethnic groups have their shares in the jihad of Afghanistan and duely should take their shares of power and responsiblity in the administration of the country. He accused Pakistan of interfering in internal affairs of Afghanistan and said Islamabad wished to install a government of its own in Kabul.

Furthermore, Hojjat ol-Eslam Akbari criticized the 28-member list proposed by U.N. special envoy Mahmoud Mestiri to handle the duties of a transitional government, adding that the list is not just and people of central Afghanistan and Hazarajat are not represented proportionately.

But, he emphasized that the Islamic Unity party has accepted the proposal put forward by Mestiri because it represents all Afghan parties and ethnic groups.

Hojjat ol-Eslam Akbari urged the U.N. to prevent foreign interference in Afghan affairs and propose a fundamental solution to the Afghan crisis. According to him, solution to the Afghan crisis lies in establishing a permanent cease-fire and holding talks between all heads of Afghan jihad groups in a calm and friendly atmosphere.

Touching on differences among factions of the Islamic Unity Party, Akbari said they were ready to cooperate to restore unity of the party without putting any condition. Warning against plots of the enemies of Islam, he said slogans which would create a rift in the ranks of Afghan Shia community should be avoided.

President Rabbani Promotes Army Officer

LD1812173895 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 18 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] On the recommendation of the Defense Ministry and the approval of esteemed President Borhanoddin Rabbani, Lt. Col. Mir Ahmad, son of Haji Abdol Baqi, has been promoted to the rank of brigadier general in recognition of his service.

Bangladesh

'Air Dropping' of Arms in India Denied

BK2112034095 Dhaka Radio Bangladesh Network in English 0200 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Bangladesh Government has termed as baseless a mischievous news item of parachute air dropping of bombs in Purulia, West Bengal published in some newspapers of Calcutta. A Foreign Office spokesman said in Dhaka yesterday attention of the government has drawn to news items in a section of press in Calcutta about the parachute air dropping of boxes containing arms, ammunition, and rocket launchers etc. in Purulia, West Bengal. According to the said report, the boxes carrying labels bearing the [words indistinct] Bangladesh. The government feels that such (?concocted) reports making unfounded insinuations against Bangladesh have been published with a malicious intent and ulterior motive to baselessly malign Bangladesh and to harm Bangladesh-India relations.

Meanwhile, while contacted, a Foreign Office spokesman said such mischievous reports are nothing but a load of rubbish and do not even deserve any comment.

Commission Reaffirms Resolve for Impartial Election

BK2112032595 Dhaka Radio Bangladesh Network in Bengali 1200 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The chief election commissioner has reaffirmed the Election Commission's [EC's] firm resolve to conduct the upcoming parliamentary elections in a free, fair and impartial manner. Addressing a news conference at the EC Secretariat in Dhaka this afternoon, Justice A.K.M. Sadeque said that it is the constitutional responsibility of the EC to conduct elections within the stipulated time. Giving a brief background to the upcoming elections, he said that it was decided to hold the elections during the month of Ramadan, keeping in view the time constraint and the opinion of political parties.

The chief election commissioner said that the commission has taken a number of practical and unprecedented steps to ensure free, fair, and impartial elections. In addition, the EC will welcome any valuable opinion and proposal from any individual or political party in this regard. Justice Sadeque hoped the political parties would arrive at a consensus and take part in the parliamentary elections scheduled for 7 February. He referred to various constitutional provisions for ensuring successful conduct of the elections by the EC. The EC in Bangladesh enjoys more powers than in many other countries, including some of our neighbors. He emphasized that the [words indistinct] the EC. The chief election commissioner said that three important (?departments) of the government have already been brought under the control of EC. They are: administration, law and order, and government-controlled media.

Opposition's Rejection of Election Criticized

BK2112034795 Dhaka THE MORNING SUN in English 19 Dec 95 p 4

[Editorial: "Fresh Election Schedule"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Election Commission has finally revised the election schedule to extend the date for poll from January 18 to February 7. According the last date for filing nominations, the date has also been changed from January 17 to February 3. [sentence as published]

Now the question is, why has the Election Commission shifted the date of polling? What necessitated this revision? The reason is not far to seek. Finding no response from the opposition parties to the original election schedule, the Election Commission thought it wise to change the election schedule. This extension of time is intended to enable the government and the opposition parties to sit across the table and settle their differences through dialogue and discussion. A comprehensive discussion is considered necessary to enable the parties concerned to hammer out an understanding to ensure their participation in the poll.

But unfortunately the opposition, before the discussion took place, rejected the revised election schedule and kept pressing for its demand for neutral nonpartisan caretaker government. The opposition made it clear any election, regardless of the date it is held, will not be acceptable to it. The rejection of the fresh election schedule by the opposition makes it clear that the government unilaterally revised it without reference to it. This is another act of stupidity by the government. The government would not have faced such an embarrassing situation if it had cared to hold preliminary discussion with the opposition before going in for revision of the schedule.

If the government has committed the mistake by changing the election schedule unilaterally, should the opposition commit similar mistake? Time is fast running out. There will not be time to hold election beyond February 22. If the opposition sticks to its guns without responding to the government call for participation in the poll as per the revised schedule, this government will collapse on February 22. As per constitution, the election shall have to be held within 90 days from the date of dissolution of the parliament. Therefore, if the opposition keeps harping on its demand neutral, nonpartisan caretaker government without participating in the poll under revised schedule, there will be no government beyond February 22 to hold election.

In a democratic system opposition is an inseparable adjunct. Therefore, the opposition has as much responsibility in running the system as the government has. If the system fails, the opposition will be equally responsible for the failure as the government.

Let it be noted in the event of collapse of the system, there will be a power vacuum which is certain to be filled in by extra constitutional means. One wonders if the opposition will like it. The opposition should therefore sit with the government and settle its problem and thereby pave the way for its participation in the poll as per the revised schedule.

'Commentary' Views Political Stalemate

BK2012072995 Dhaka JAI JAI DIN in Bengali 28 Nov 95 p 7

["Commentary" by Bhibhuranjan Sarkar]

[FBIS Translated Text] Is the country's political situation heading toward violence? The peace-loving people of the country are helplessly watching the political leaders, who are unable to shake the biases of their respective political parties. They are unable to show the nation any ray of hope. The concern of conscious citizens has increased after seeing the manner and direction in which the political situation of the country is moving, but those who make political decisions or control politics do not seem worried.

The government has said it will not participate in the by- elections. From the beginning, the opposition parties said they will not take part in the by-elections, but will resist them. Despite this, the farce of announcing the schedule for the by- elections was made on 22 November. Why? Who was to be cheated? Who was to be fooled? What has the government achieved by doing this? This has led to the damaging of vehicles of several hundred citizens who are not involved in politics. The announcement of the schedule for the by-elections caused damage to the owners of the vehicles. Can it be proved that anything has been achieved through this announcement? Is the government pushing the country toward destruction in a calculated and planned way?

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia addressed the nation on 24 November. There is no doubt that it was a well-drafted speech. Did this speech not frustrate the people instead of fulfilling their expectations? The prime minister did not say anything provocative, nor did she issue any threat to the opposition. Even after this, why are the people not being relieved of their anxiety? The reason is that there was no proposal in the prime minister's speech aimed at resolving the prevailing political crisis. It did not spell out any initiatives or steps aimed at bringing the opposition parties to the discussion table. Whether the country is ruled by an elected government or an autocratic government, the ruling and opposition parties in our country have always been opposed to each other and have never cooperated. It is believed that the ruling party does not commit any mistake or do any harm to the country while the opposition parties are the cause of all blunders and losses. A party talks and behaves one way when it is in the opposition, but when it assumes power it assumes a different face.

No Mistakes, Everything Is Correct?

This picture was projected through the prime minister's address to the nation. She gave an account of the successes achieved during her term of office. There was no mention of any failure. Despite various types of provocations and undemocratic activities by the opposition parties, she has always displayed patience and extended the hand of cooperation. The prime minister tried to prove how sincere she and her government have been in resolving the problems of the country. She also wanted to show how destructive the opposition has been. It would have been good if we could have accepted all the statements made by the prime minister as the truth. Can any conscious person do this?

Some statements made by the prime minister need clarification:

Referring to the rule of Ershad [former president], the prime minister said the people rejected that illegal government, which killed democracy and indulged in limitless corruption and plundering during its nine long years of rule. During his rule, the economy was on the verge of collapse and the state exchequer did not even have the money to pay the salary of government employees.

There is no controversy over the fact that the rule of Ershad, who was popularly known as "shameless of the world," was responsible for the destruction of the country. Yet there is certainly scope for debate over the sensational information that at the time there was no money in the state treasury for paying the salary of government employees.

The prime minister added that responsibility for removing the burden of corruption, immoral practices, mismanagement, and irregularities committed during the long period of nine years fell on us, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party [BNP]. The duty of building an accountable, honest, and efficient administration and leading the nation on the path of development and progress also fell on us in accordance with the wishes of the people.

This statement is very true. The question arises, however: To what extent has the BNP government of Khaleda Zia succeeded in accomplishing this task? If anybody listens to her entire speech, they might get the impression that perhaps she has performed all of the responsibilities in accordance with the aspirations of the people of the country. Whatever she has failed to achieve is due to the noncooperation of the opposition parties. It can be emphatically said after reviewing all the events that the burden of corruption, immoral practices, mismanagement, and irregularities have not been totally eradicated from the country during the rule of Khaleda Zia. Some people believe that these evils have increased during the reign of Khaleda Zia in comparison to the rule of Ershad. If it has not increased, then it is in no way less than what took place during the rule of Ershad. What is not happening under the rule of Khaleda Zia? Everything, including bribery, corruption, politicization, extortion, terrorism, and thuggery. It cannot be said that there is a good administration in the country when police officials conspire to blackmail businessmen with a view to extort money.

It is difficult to verify the truth of the statement that Khaleda Zia has established an accountable, honest, and efficient administration in the country. Can the Information Ministry provide some unique examples to establish that the accountability, honesty, and efficiency of the administration have increased during the rule of Khaleda Zia in comparison to that of the Ershad regime? At a function held on the occasion of Armed Forces Day, former opposition leader Sheikh Hasina sat beside the prime minister and exchanged views. This is a very significant political event, but it was not given coverage in the official broadcast media. What kind of honesty is this? Corruption charges were brought against Minister Majidul Huq, but the issue was put in cold storage without carrying out any proper inquiry. What kind of accountability or honesty is this? When a crisis was created in the country centering on a fertilizer shortage, a farmer was shot dead. Is this an example of accountability or administrative efficiency? A press note issued by the government said that a prostitute named Yasmin committed suicide by jumping out of a police van in Dinajpur. Do we accept this as an example of administrative efficiency? The traffic congestion in Dhaka has not been resolved even though the prime minister issued a directive in this regard. Even after this, do we need to agree that an efficient administration exists in the country?

Wanted To Take, Not Give

The prime minister has said that the opposition parties have not given any cooperation to the government. She did not say that the opposition parties have not received any cooperation from the government. The BNP failed to abide by the verbal commitment it gave to the Awami League regarding the repeal of indemnity [ordinance that prevents the trial of the killers of former President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and members of his family during a military coup in 1975]. The BNP has also violated the agreement signed for the withdrawal of cases filed against 24 eminent citizens, including Jahanara Imam, who are associated with the Annihilation Committee [committee formed to trace those who collaborated with the Pakistani Army in 1971]. The BNP also did not allow any opportunity for discussion in the Parliament on the charges of corruption brought against Majidul Huq or agree to any inquiry into the matter. In Parliament, the opposition parties were allowed to talk but none of their demands were accepted. Cooperation cannot be one-sided. It can be received only when given. The BNP wanted to receive cooperation, but not to give. As a result, the gap has increased and the mistrust has grown.

After the by-elections in Mirpur and Magura, the opposition parties decided that free and fair elections were not possible in this country under any party government. Hence, they raised the demand that the next general elections be held under a nonpartisan and neutral caretaker government. At the beginning, the government rejected this demand. Later, it launched propaganda against this demand by describing it as illegal and unconstitutional. It is perhaps not true that elections held under a caretaker government would be free and fair. It is possible to hold free and fair elections if they are conducted by a powerful Election Commission and the election rules are strictly enforced. There has been no such instance in our country. As a result, almost all political parties are in favor of holding elections under a caretaker government. Among the major political parties, except the BNP, almost all are in favor of holding elections under a caretaker government. Why has this demand been rejected? It is not proper for the government to accept any demand raised by an alliance, but if all the political parties in the country are united behind a single demand, then incorporation of this demand in the Constitution should be considered justified and democratic. It is also not proper that the government, by the strength of its power, should reject a demand that is acceptable to a majority of political parties. The government of Khaleda Zia has done this.

The prime minister, in her speech, tried to prove that the demand of the opposition parties regarding the formation of a caretaker government is illogical. She said the three opposition parties that have launched an agitation to press for realization of this demand did not have a consensus on the bill regarding this demand that was submitted in the Parliament. The prime minister added that the opposition parties are not firm on their formula. She added that they are adamant only on one issue — they want the government elected to power by your votes to hand over power before the expiry of its term of office to an unelected person of their choice to run the affairs of state and conduct the elections.

The prime minister has done an injustice to the opposition parties by giving this interpretation to the nation. Since the by- elections in Magura, the opposition parties have been absolutely firm on one issue; that is, the holding of elections under a neutral caretaker government. There may be a difference of opinion among them regarding the formula, but there are no differences among them on their main demand. Besides, the opposition parties have not asked the government to hand over power before the expiry of its term of office. Their demand is to hand over power to a caretaker government only for a period of 90 days, after the expiry of the term of office of the present government, for conducting the elections. The demand to dissolve the Parliament was raised only after the government rejected this demand and resorted to delaying tactics. The opposition MP's resigned from the Parliament on 28 December last year. The prime minister may gain satisfaction by misinterpreting the opposition demand, but this does not reflect her political honesty.

Terming the demand for the formation of a caretaker government unconstitutional, the prime minister said that the circumstances and situation in the country now are totally different from 1990. During that time the Constitution provided for a presidential system. At that time, any unelected person could be nominated as vice president. If for any reason the post of president fell vacant, the vice president could temporarily perform the duties of the president.

The prime minister added that the parliamentary system was introduced through the 12th Amendment. Under this system, the prime minister must be a member of Parliament and must enjoy the confidence of a majority of the members of Parliament.

All politically conscious people are aware of this fact. As there is no provision for a caretaker government in the Constitution, the opposition parties are demanding that a provision should be added to the Constitution for holding at least three successive elections under caretaker governments. For this purpose, they have sought the cooperation and support of the ruling party. Had there been a provision for a caretaker government in the Constitution, this much agitation on the issue would not have been required. Now the question arises: Why is the BNP raising so many objections to amending the Constitution with a view to making provision for the holding of elections under a caretaker government? Has the BNP become the sole agency of all good and gracious ideas because it bagged the majority of seats in the elections? In its heart, it has an autocratic mentality similar to that of kings and emperors. Although it says it is uncompromising on the issue of democracy, a time will come when this attitude will become an object of laughter.

The prime minister has said: We sincerely want free and peaceful elections — free from terrorism and rigging — with a view to strengthening the democracy that has been achieved. In the meantime, the Election Commission has been made much more powerful through large-scale amendments to election-related laws aimed with at preventing any government or opposition force from exercising undue influence on the election process.

Now the question arises: How powerful has the Election Commission been made? Can the Election Commission independently make any decision without regard to the government? Until now, the current Election Commission has failed to display its independent strength to the people of the country. It has failed to win the confidence of the people. The people of the country regard the Election Commission as subservient to the government. If the BNP really wants fair and peaceful elections, devoid of any terrorism and rigging, then why is it so reluctant to accept the demand for a caretaker government alongside making the Election Commission more powerful? Has the Constitution become such a sacred document for the BNP that it is against making any changes in it, even to establish peace and political stability in the country?

Situation and Circumstances Are Different Now

President Abdur Rahman Biswas, acting on the advice of the prime minister, dissolved the fifth Parliament on 25 November. The Election Commission will now announce a new schedule for the parliamentary elections. The prime minister, in her address to the nation, urged the opposition parties to participate in the forthcoming parliamentary elections for the continuation of the democratic process. The opposition parties have categorically stated that they will not take part in any elections under the prevailing situation; that is, under the BNP government. After the prime minister's speech, it has become clear to everyone that the government will not accept the demand for a caretaker government. What will happen in the country now? Will the government participate in the elections alone, even without any of the opposition parties? Will the opposition parties resist the holding of this election through a mass movement or compel the government to accept their demand for a caretaker government?

The BNP may go into the elections alone, taking into consideration the constitutional obligations. This would be a very bad decision, though. Some may believe that the opposition parties, including the Awami League, will suffer losses if they do not join the elections. In reality, it will be suicidal for the BNP to enter the elections alone. After staging this kind of election in 1988, Ershad continued in power for two years. In this regard, the BNP should remember that the situation and circumstances that prevailed in 1988 do not exist now. A presidential system of government existed during that time and the Parliament was merely a rubber stamp for Ershad. No one cared whether anyone was elected to that Parliament or not. Under the present parliamentary system, it would be a bad precedence if the Parliament is elected and a government formed after farcical elections. Besides, it does not seem that the BNP government has the administrative efficiency or capability to control the violence that may erupt in the country if it goes ahead with such elections. At present, there is doubt as to whether the BNP is under the total control of Khaleda Zia. One minister is harassing another minister, one leader is declaring another leader of his area unwanted, and two groups are openly engaging in gun battles. These are signs of weakness in the party. Hence, there is no alternative but to reach an understanding with the opposition parties with a view to freeing the country from conflicts and holding credible elections. There is still time. It will be disgraceful for the BNP to hold elections in the country if it fails to hold talks with the opposition parties to ensure their participation in the elections. It does not seem that the opposition parties will play an indiscreet role if the ruling party stops questioning their patriotism and creates a congenial atmosphere for the holding of talks. How can the opposition parties sit for a dialogue if the legality of their demand is not acknowledged?

No Time to Waste

Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury, a Bangladesh journalist and writer living in London, believes that the 1990's is not a decade of mass revolt or demonstrations. Everywhere, a climate of compromise is prevailing. From the Middle East to Bosnia, bitter enemies are sitting together.

The government has accepted two demands of the opposition parties by dissolving the Parliament and canceling the by-elections. Now an opportunity has been created for holding a dialogue on their main demand. The opposition parties certainly realize the importance of sitting for a dialogue, but the government should take the initiative and come forward. It is necessary for the government and the opposition parties to hold talks in a congenial atmosphere on the issue of whether there is any scope for not nominating a BNP member as prime minister, but rather holding elections under the president, assisted by some neutral and nonpartisan people. It is also necessary to take the advice of experts. There is no time for both sides to waste by issuing statements blaming each other. Elections should be held within 90 days of the date of dissolution of the Parliament. This election will not be meaningful if just one party participates. It should be remembered that this type of election will not resolve the political crisis.

It will be possible to avoid the inevitable confrontation in Bangladesh if the BNP and Awami League take each other into confidence and remove the mistrust between them. It will be a positive step if the supporters of the BNP and Awami League try to prove that the stand taken by their respective parties is wrong and pressure their party leaders to arrive at an understanding on the issue after taking into consideration the concern expressed by a large segment of society. It will not take time to establish political stability in the country if the supporters of the two parties are able to compel their leaders to arrive at an understanding. The struggle to establish supremacy by hurling bombs, damaging vehicles, and firing bullets will not be successful. The only victory will be that of good sense and consideration. Instead of resorting to bomb blasts, destruction, and terrorism, the Awami League supporters should stage a sit-in in front of the BNP office, and the BNP supporters should stage a sit-in in front of the Awami League office and continue doing so till the leaders of the two parties sit for a dialogue to reach an understanding. This will surely be more effective than resorting to strikes and blockades.

Will the supporters of these parties consider resolving this problem by adopting this method?

Police Arrest 35 During 8-Hour Strike

BK2112034295 Dhaka Radio Bangladesh Network in Bengali 1500 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Police have arrested 35 people from various parts of the city on charges of throwing bombs and damaging buses and rickshas during the eight-hour strike today. BANGLADESH SANGBAD SANGSTHA reports that a police constable was wounded when a pro-strike picketer began throwing brick bats. The agency reports that supporters of the strike blasted a number of hand grenades in different places of the city since early this morning in an attempt to create panic among the people. The agency adds that rickshas, small taxis, and scooter cars plied in the city as usual. Some private buses and Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation buses plied during the strike. Government offices, main business and trading centers, banks and other organizations functioned as usual.

India

Alleged Murderer of U.S. Tourist Killed

BK2012165195 Hong Kong AFP in English 1631 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] SRINAGAR, India, Dec 20 (AFP) — Police shot dead a Moslem separatist guerrilla who allegedly murdered an American tourist in the northern Indian state of Kashmir more than a year ago, officials announced here Wednesday.

Police identified the alleged killer as Sher Khan and said the separatist fighter was slain in an overnight gunbattle with officers and commandos in the state summer capital Srinagar, hub of a Moslem secessionist drive in Kashmir.

Khan is accused of murdering Stephen Paul of the United States in July 1994, just days after the American arrived here on holiday.

The Kashmir police department said it would give a 100,000-rupee (2,900-dollar) reward to the officers who gunned down Paul's elusive killer in a garden near Srinagar's scenic Dal Lake late Tuesday.

A close associate of Khan was also shot dead, police said, adding that officers found four AK-47 assault rifles, a grenade-launcher and ammunition at the site of the firefight.

Residents identified Khan's associate as Hilal Ahmed and said he was the chief commander of a previously-unknown Moslem separatist organisation, Jehad Force.

Besides killing the U.S. citizen, Khan was wanted by police for several other murders and other crimes in Kashmir, where Moslem militants are currently holding four Western hostages.

Witnesses said Khan's slaying sparked off anti-Indian protests on Wednesday in Srinagar, with Moslem political and separatist leaders accusing the security forces of slaying the gunman in cold blood.

Shops, businesses and offices shut down and vehicles went on to the streets to protest the slaying of Ahmed and Khan, one of Kashmir's most-wanted guerrilla fighters.

More than 12,000 people have died in Kashmir, India's only Moslem-majority state, since 1989 when the militants stepped up violence in the Himalayan frontier state bordering Pakistan.

Foreign tourists are regularly advised to remain close to security zones in Srinagar, but many still go on trekking expeditions in the valley without escorts.

India accuses Pakistan of fomenting strife in Kashmir. Islamabad denies the charge but admits extending political and diplomatic support to what i@ asserts is the Kashmiris' rightful struggle for freedom from Indian rule.

The two countries have fought two of their three wars over Kashmir since 1947.

Mukherjee Calls Nuclear Program 'Peaceful'

BK2112042595 Delhi THE HINDUSTAN TIMES in English 19 Dec 95 p 1

[Report by THE HINDUSTAN TIMES New Delhi correspondent]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee today reiterated the "peaceful" nature of India's nuclear programme while categorically denying reports in the American Press that preparations were underway for a nuclear test at Pokaran in the Rajasthan desert.

"The reports (in the US Press) are speculative and baseless. Our Prime Minister has formulated the nuclear policy very clearly. We have the capability but we have deliberately opted not to manufacture nuclear weapons", Mr Mukherjee told newsmen here today. Refusing to state whether he considered "inspired" the reports (based on classified satellite data) in two prominent American newspapers, the Minister said so far New Delhi hasn't formally heard from Washington on the subject in question.

A questioner sought to know from Mr Mukherjee whether a missile test instead of a nuclear test was planned at the Pokaran site? To that, he said the technical demonstration aspect of Agni has been completed and the question of deployment of 'Prithvi' "will arise as the (security) situation demands."

Addressing to Press primarily to share the outcome of the 16th meeting of the SAARC [South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation] Council of Ministers, which concluded here this evening, the questions Mr Mukherjee mostly faced related to the alleged plans of a nuclear test, the CTBT [Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty] and the Non-Proliferation issue on the whole. His unequivocal "no" to the query whether India intended to stage a nuclear explosion, should set at rest speculations on that score triggered by reports, one after another, in the New York Times and the Washington Post.

Mr Mukherjee was pointedly asked whether a political decision has been taken by the Narasimha Rao Government for or against the signing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) currently under negotiation in Geneva? "We are actively engaging ourselves in the discussions. We are not disengaging ourselves", he replied, adding: "We will like to place our viewpoint at the Conference on Disarmament itself...."

In response to a related question, the Minister stated that India did not this time co-sponsor at the UN a resolution calling for the prompt conclusion of the CTBT because the formulations it contained weren't up to New Delhi's expectations. "The resolution," he argued, "does not reflect the fact that the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has been indefinitely extended."

Mr Mukherjee clarified that India favoured the CTBT. But at the same time, the Treaty, which the US wants concluded in 1996, should reflect the "overwhelming" world view about the elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time frame.

Pakistan Called 'Weapons-Oriented'

BK2012161295 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1530 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Rajya Sabha was informed today that a constant review is being done on India's security situation in view of Pakistan's clandestine weapons-oriented nuclear program. In a written answer in the house, the external affairs minister, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, said the government will take adequate steps to cope with any threat to the country's security. He said the government is aware of reports that an 184-ton heavy dome was installed last month on the containing [as heard] building of the Chashma nuclear power plant being built by Pakistan with the assistance of China.

India 'Out of Step' With U.S. Nuclear Policy

BK2112035595 Delhi THE PIONEER in English 20 Dec 95 p 9

[Article by Shubha Singh: "Out of Step Once Again"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] India is once again out of step with the US orchestrated march along the path of nuclear non-proliferation. The US establishment had obviously expected New Delhi to tango for the satisfactory conclusion of the proposed Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). But New Delhi is not inclined to do so.

Reports in The New York Times and The Washington Post claiming that India was planning to conduct a nuclear test seem to be the response of a certain section of the US establishment to repaint India as the bad guy on the nuclear issue. The US is keen to get India back in line on the proposed test ban treaty and the pressure on New Delhi to do so has begun to be felt. Also, with India on the defensive over supposed plans for a second nuclear test, it would not be in a position to bring other countries around to its point of view.

Coincidentally, a news report in a Russian publication, 'Komsomolskaya Pravda', has it that Russia has offered to sell India its latest nuclear-capable strategic missiles, the mobile Topol-M missiles. Russian officials have denied the report, just as Indian officials have denied reports of India's plans for a second nuclear test. But the string of stories have made their appearance in such close proximity that they have given rise to an impression that there is a design behind them.

The Conference on Disarmament, which has been meeting in Geneva to discuss a comprehensive test ban arrangement, is to resume its session in the first week of January. With a the image of a nuclear recalcitrant country that is on the verge of nuclear testing, India is not likely to get much of a hearing for its own position at the Conference.

A violent dust storm 21 years ago is said to have prevented the US intelligence establishment from discovering that the Indians were working on a nuclear implosion at Pokaran in Rajasthan. The nuclear implosions when it took place in 1974, had come as a complete surprise to the Americans.

Now after another dust storm in Rajasthan seems to have rustled up a media storm in the US. The US establishment, which has just stopped short of describing India as a nuclear rogue state, has had to refer plaintively to the departure from India's "own long standing position against nuclear testing". India's self-restraint on nuclear testing never had any salutary effect on these sections earlier.

Journalists from The New York Times and The Washington Post are reported to have been provided access to spy satellite pictures, which "recorded scientific and technical activity at Pokaran" leading to the impression that a nuclear test is in the offing. These reports are similar to the earlier alarm in the US over the possibility of a nuclear conflict between India and Pakistan in mid- 1990, which sent a senior US official scurrying to Islamabad and New Delhi to avert the disaster. Observers in the region have viewed these reports with a good deal of scepticism, as there was no sign of the impending conflict in either capital at that time.

Pokaran is also used by the Air Force for its normal activity. Less than two months ago, the Indian Air Force had taken a group of Indian journalists to watch a display at Pokaran. The Indian defence establishment has not reached the high stage of meticulous planning where it can conduct a group of defence correspondents anywhere near a region where some top secret activity is being planned.

Managing a CTBT is high on the agenda of US foreign policy. It can be displayed as an important international initiative by President Bill Clinton during a presidential election year. President Clinton even wrote a personal letter to the heads of government of the 38 countries participating in the Conference on Disarmament, urging an early agreement on the test ban treaty. This could be followed by an agreement to ban the production of a nuclear fissile material.

Washington had naturally expected that it would have New Delhi's active support on the proposed treaty as India has been a long- standing advocate of a test ban treaty as well as a ban on the production of fissile material. Both countries have worked closely in the initial stages of the discussions in Geneva on the subject. But in recent months New Delhi has been charting an independent course as it feels that the CTBT in its US inspired version is being used as a goal for nuclear non-proliferation and not for disarmament.

In the recent months, New Delhi has in a number of statements by Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao and External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee, at the Non-Aligned Movement summit and the Commonwealth summit, clearly linked the comprehensive test ban to the question of global nuclear disarmament. It declined to co-sponsor a resolution at the United Nations General Assembly on a comprehensive test ban that did not make the treaty an integral part of total nuclear disarmament.

The nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was extended for an indefinite period earlier this year. But the extension was not a smooth process as many nations enough had been done by the international community to address the question of nuclear disarmament. According to the Indian viewpoint, the NPT merely perpetuates the possession of nuclear weapons among the present nuclear states.

In the recent months, there has been a hardening of public opinion in the country on the nuclear issue. The Bharatiya Janata Party has for long advocated a nuclear weapons programme, but this opinion is now being voiced in many other quarters as well, including those who are traditionally nuclear hawks.

US officials have portrayed the test ban treaty as a means for capping the nuclear programmes of India and Pakistan. There is a growing sense of anger that the Indian indigenous nuclear programme is equated with Pakistan's clandestine acquisition. Pakistan has a tested nuclear missile design, acquired from China, while Indian scientists have conducted just one nuclear test 21 years ago.

The Brown Amendment in the US Congress is not merely a device that allows a resumption of US arms supply to Pakistan. It is also a signal that Washington is not unduly concerned with Pakistan's clandestine nuclear programme.

New Delhi had kept out of the discussions for extension of the NPT as it is not a signatory. But as one of the original advocates of the comprehensive test ban agreement, it has a legitimate right to work towards creating an opinion on the subject that takes into account its the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament.

Washington would not like New Delhi to rock the boat on its carefully crafted version of the test ban agreement, especially when France and China are busily clocking up their nuclear tests till the agreement comes into effect.

Satellite pictures of Pokaran is among the first salvos in the effort to make New Delhi fall into line. As such, Indian authorities can now expect to face a good deal of pressure on this count as the Conference on Disarmament gets into its final rounds of negotiations on the CTBT.

Support for Rao's Position on CTB Examined

BK2112055095 Delhi THE PIONEER in English 20 Dec 95 p 8

[Article by "security affairs analyst" Brahma Chellaney: "CTB Plan: Will America Pull Off a Second Coup?"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In the run-up to the NPT [Non-Proliferation Treaty] extension conference, a barrage of propaganda was let loose by the United States and the other nuclear powers on how they had made genuine movement towards disarmament and met their obligations under the treaty's Article VI, the centre-piece of the 1968 bargain between nuclear and non-nuclear states. Bloated claims were made on the significance of the bilateral arms control accords between Washington and Moscow, and new security "assurances" were extended to the non-nuclear states. Demarches and high-pressure lobbying were employed as key elements of a diplomatic campaign. Commitments were won from major non-aligned countries, including India, not to openly campaign against the US extensions plan. Key disarmament ambassadors were won over or neutralised.

The blurred line separating nonproliferation scholars from their governments disappeared completely in the period ahead of the conference, with analysts turning into-unabashed zealots. In Washington, in the style of a pro- or anti-abortion rally, research institutions and non-governmental organisations formed a coalition and held a meeting at the Carnegie Endowment with members sporting badges saying, "We Support NPT Permanent Extension". Coercive diplomacy and the distortions unleashed on the world were pivotal to the ultimate triumph. In the words of Egyptian ambassador, Mr Mohammed Shaker, "No stone was left unturned."

Elated by a victory that "surpassed all our expectations", the US has jumped into a new battle—winning international support for a non-proliferation-oriented nuclear test ban with comprehensive loopholes for the specific benefit of the eating powers. As the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament (CD) prepares to begin a critical round of negotiations on the Comprehensive Test Ban (CTB) agreement, the unfolding US strategy appears to incorporate all the elements of the successful NPT extension plan. Demarches, political pressure and sophisticated propaganda are again being employed—independently and multilaterally—as tools to meet the only time specific political condition attached to the NPT extension: A CTB agreement "no latter than 1996".

The difference this time is that much of the pressure is being applied on a single country, India, which can make or unmake any deal in Geneva. India, the intellectual guide of the non-nuclear world on disarmament, is playing a central role at Geneva and also happens to be the principal target of the kind of CTB the US and its allies would like to impose—a test ban as a technical "fix" to control horizontal proliferation. Such a CTB will leave India, the only threshold country not to receive tested warhead designs from external sources, saddled with a substandard nuclear capability unable to meet its deterrence requirements.

Collective Bullying

The latest use of the media to plant reports about alleged Indian nuclear testing plans is designed to put New Delhi on the defensive help undergird the urgency of an early CTB accord, and rekindle Islamabad's fears about India's nuclear intentions at a time when the two rivals—to the discomfort of the leading powers—are cooperating in Geneva on achieving an authentic test ban. The US-led strategy seeks to both cajole and coerce India into accepting a flawed test ban. Having failed to sweet-talk India into tieing the CTB noose round its own neck despite singing themselves hoarse on the virtues of the action, the major powers and their surrogates are now resorting to not-so-subtle tactics.

These include collective bullying, like by the G-7, stepped-up political pressure at the highest level, such as Mr Clinton's letter to Mr Narasimha Rao, identifying and winning over (or neutralising) Indian officials with a say in CTB policy, and using nonproliferation scholars and journalists to disseminate misinformation and disinformations. The claim that the West's CTB version is "nondiscriminatory" and the hype over Clinton's acceptance of the "zero option", even when India's zero-yield language in the draft treaty continues to be opposed and a series of hydronuclear tests have been ordered at Nevada's underground site, are too painful a reminder of the carefully orchestrated propaganda that was unleashed to win the NPT's permanent extension. The extension's chief sponsor, Canada, is sending its Prime Minister, Mr Jean Chretien, to New Delhi in three weeks to meet with Mr Rao in the aftermath of the uproar over Ottawa's impudent demarche. If Mr Chretien raises the CTB issue, Mr Rao should remind him of his country's key role in subverting the goal of universal disarmament and the test-ban purpose through the perpetual legitimisation of weapons of holocaust.

Growing Support

Regrettably, some Western distortions are finding their way into our Press. These include claims that India is getting isolated internationally and that Mr. Rao has yet to define his CTB policy. It has also been contended that the main issue facing New Delhi is whether to sign or not to sign a test ban, as if a CTB accord has already hen reached. There are still some 1,200 unsettled technical and political differences in the 104-page CTB "draft rolling text" including key questions such as the scope of the zero yield, permitted and prescribed activities, and the treaty's entry into force. Mr Rao has clearly articulated the Indian policy in his August 8 and October 19 speeches: India is determined to fashion a CTB that is truly comprehensive with "no hidden agenda and no loophole" and is an integral part of a phased, time-bound plan of total nuclear disarmament.

There is growing international support for Mr Rao's position that the CTB negotiations provide a decisive opportunity to wrest from the nuclear powers a commitment to a binding disarmament timetable the they refused to give at the NPT extension conference in. New York. Last week, the UN approved by a 85-18 vote a resolution co- sponsored by India and other non-aligned nations saying "a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty and the proposed treaty on fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices must both constitute disarmament measures and not only non-proliferation measures, and that they must be important steps leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework".

In the absence of a coherent strategy and determined leadership in New York, the nonaligned nations wilted under pressure one by one. If New York is not to be repeated in Geneva, India has to resolutely spearhead its strategy for a true CTB. As a vital step, India should help pluck out all the glaring loopholes from the draft CTB and raise the political and technical costs of a test ban for the nuclear powers. If India stands firm, it will block the US from pulling off a second consecutive arms control coup. If India retreats from its position, the non-aligned block in the 37-member CD will collapse like a pack of cards despite the veto power that each state enjoys.

Article Examines Delhi's 'Nuclear Option'

BK2112045695 Madras THE HINDU in English 20 Dec 95 p 12

[Article by C. Raja Mohan: "India's Nuclear Options"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] FOR India's nuclear policy, this is the time of reckoning. With the last lap of negotiations on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) set to resume early next month in Geneva, New Delhi can no longer postpone critical decisions on India's nuclear posture and national security.

Even without the American intelligence leaks on the alleged intentions of India to conduct a nuclear test, New Delhi would have been under some compulsion to show its hand at Geneva. But with the American decision to step up its pressure tactics against India on the CTBT. New Delhi can no longer fudge its position on the nuclear issue. In many ways, the American rush to conclude the CTBT over the last few months appears to have forced the Indian Government to concentrate its mind on the long term implications of the treaty for its national security as well as its nuclear diplomacy.

All these years India could avoid the hard decisions on its nuclear posture by simple stating that India would keep its option to make nuclear weapons open. The steady advances in China's nuclear capabilities. and the repeated confirmation since the late 1980s of Pakistan's status as a de facto nuclear weapon power, did not shake India out of its self-imposed restraint against overt weaponisation of its nuclear programme.

If India was unwilling to bring its domestic nuclear debate to a closure, and quite content with repeating the mantra that the option remains open, the United States has been moving decisively to impose qualitative and quantitative limits on India's nuclear capabilities. After failing to constrain India's nuclear programme through a regional nonproliferation framework, the Clinton administration has decided to use the global route to cap India's nuclear programme.

Officials of the Clinton administration have repeatedly gone on record in recent months declaring that the primary objective of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the convention to cut off the production of fissile material is to cap the nuclear programmes of threshold countries like India. The CTBT and the cut-off treaties, it has become apparent, are the first steps in the declared American strategy to "cap, reduce over a period of time, and eventually eliminate" the nuclear and missile capabilities of India.

With the recognition that the CTBT is the first step on the slippery slope towards denuclearisation, Indian policy-makers and defence experts, over the last few months, have been engaged in a serious debate on the implications of the CTBT for India's national security and the credibility of its current nuclear posture. It has begun to dawn on many Indians that even as New Delhi proclaims that its nuclear weapon option remains "open", the primary effect of the American global arms control initiatives, the CTBT in particular, may be to "close" it forever.

The impending conclusion of the CTBT has forced the Indian analysts to rethink the nuclear option seriously. The diplomatic positions that India takes at the CTBT negotiations in the next few weeks will have to be based on decisions the Indian Government makes on the future of its nuclear weapon option. As New Delhi considers the CTBT and its nuclear future, it has four broad choices. First, India could decide it will support without any reservation the CTBT and forswear its right to conduct any nuclear explosions in the future. This clearly was the international understanding of India's policy until recently. Responding to the media reports in the United States that India might be making preparations to conduct its second nuclear test, the Clinton administration has signal led that it would do everything to force India to fall in line on the CTBT.

Accepting the CTBT in its present form poses a number of problems for India. There is a growing recognition in India that the CTBT is not a fair treaty and is only aimed at freezing American nuclear hegemony over the rest of the world. American officials have made no secret of this. They have stated that the CTBT would freeze all nations on the nuclear learning curve, with the United States way ahead of the pack. Even if India agrees to swallow its opposition to discriminatory arms control regimes. it would have to consider the impact of the CTBT on its nuclear option.

Some respected Indian analysts have argued that New Delhi can live with a CTBT in the present form. They suggest that India can build a credible nuclear deterrent against Pakistan and China without ever having to test nuclear weapons. They argue that deterrence based on uncertainty is credible, and that India's adversaries cannot assume that India's nuclear weapons will not work because they have not been tested. A small untested nuclear arsenal and a doctrine of minimum deterrence are adequate for India's security interests, it is suggested. Without a tested warhead, others insist, India's nuclear posture would not be credible. Without testing and developing at least one reliable design of a nuclear warhead that can be delivered by missiles. It is argued, India will be placed at a disadvantage vis-a-vis both China and Pakistan. China has tested nuclear weapons for years. Pakistan has acquired a tested nuclear missile warhead design from Beijing. This school of thought argues that a CTBT will forever rule out India emerging as a credible nuclear power.

The second choice for India is to oppose the CTBT in its present form but take no decision on testing its nuclear weapons now. Questioning the inequities of the CTBT, and pointing to the fact that it is not an integral part of a plan for total disarmament, India could formally declare that it will not sign the CTBT unless it is linked to firm and tangible commitments from the great powers to abolish nuclear weapons in a reasonably short time-frame.

Such a position will allow India to take the moral high ground on disarmament and remain, as it did on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, a conscientious objector to unfair arms control treaties. But that still leaves the question of India's nuclear posture. There is a strong argument that if India does not test nuclear weapons now, it will never be able to do so. Once the CTBT comes into force, India will find that its nuclear option, while theoretically open, is for all practical purposes closed. It is suggested that there is a small window of opportunity now, before the CTBT is completed and while France and China continue to test, for India to take the plunge on nuclear testing.

The third choice for India is to use its signature on the CTBT as a bargaining chip with the United States. Threatening to either boycott the CTBT or begin nuclear testing, India could demand a price from the West to join the CTBT. The Indian wish list could include better access to advanced technologies both defence and civilian, full membership of the global export control mechanisms, renewed American civilian nuclear and space cooperation, and Western "nuclear stability assistance" that will make the Indian deterrent safe and reliable.

Such a nuclear bargain might be in everyone's interest. It will integrate India into the management of the global nonproliferation regimes as a responsible partner. The problem of the credibility of the Indian nuclear deterrent will be addressed without a formal change in the status of India as an undeclared nuclear weapon power. Such a bar gain could obviate the political shock a Indian nuclear test will administer to the global nonproliferation regime.

But such a bargain appears unlikely at this stage. Brinkmanship and deal-making run against the culture of the Indian foreign policy and its diplomatic style. The Clinton administration, which will have to take the initiative for such a deal is likely to face considerable obstacles at home in the form of domestic legislation and bureaucratic opposition to change in its policy towards India.

The fourth and final option for India is to begin testing its nuclear weapons. This does not necessarily mean India will have to embark on a prolonged series of testing in defiance of the international system. A small number of tests that will allow India to impart credibility to its minimum deterrent posture should indeed be adequate for its security needs. After completing the series of tests, India could join the CTBT as a declared nuclear weapon power.

Choosing the course of testing and signing the CTBT will demand considerable courage from the leadership, within and outside the Indian Government. To be sure, there will be some costs. India will have to risk, what one American official called, the "pain of punishment". But then India will have to choose at some point between the risk of angering the United States and defending its own national security interests.

Alert Sounded After Arms Seized in Bengal

BK2012100595 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0830 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Bihar, an alert has been sounded in the border districts following recovery of a large quantity of arms and ammunition from the Purulia District of West Bengal. Our Ranchi correspondent reports that DG [director general] of police of Bihar is reaching Purulia this afternoon where he will meet senior police officials from the state. Meanwhile, the search for arms has been intensified in 10 villages of Jhalda and Jaipur police station areas. The police superintendent of Purulia told our correspondent that a large number of arms were recovered in raids last night. At least 116 AK-47 rifles, rocket launchers, grenades, and large quantities of ammunition have been recovered in the past two days.

Inquiry Ordered on 'Air-Dropped' Arms in Bengal

BK2112042795 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0245 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The West Bengal Government has ordered a CID [Criminal Investigation Department] inquiry into the air dropping of arms and ammunition in Purulia District. Teams of defense experts, including weapon specialists and the Air Force intelligence personnel, have already arrived at Jhalda to make a detailed investigation. The search operation for air-dropped arms has been further intensified.

AIR Ranchi correspondent Neeraj Pathak, after visiting the site, reports that one more parachute was recovered yesterday at Simile village under Jaipur police station. Altogether, 141 sophisticated AK-(?47) rifles, 10 rocket launchers, 61 antitank grenades, and more than 12,000 rounds of ammunition have been recovered so far from 12 villages under Jhalda and Jaipur police station limits. Our correspondent adds that a general alert has been sounded in the border districts of Ranchi, Bokaro, and Dhanbad.

President's Rule in Kashmir Extended 6 Months

BK1912091995 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0830 GMT 19 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Parliament approved extension of president's rule in Jammu and Kashmir for a further six months from the 18th of next month. The statutory resolution moved by the home minister, Mr. S.B. Chavan, was approved by the Lok Sabha without any discussion a short while ago. The house took up only the extension of president's rule in Jammu and Kashmir after an impromptu discussion on breaking the deadlock over the telecom tender issue.

Responding to the demand of the opposition, the parliamentary affairs minister, MR. V.C. Shukla, made it clear that the government is prepared for any type of probe into the telecom tender issue after a full-scale discussion in parliament. He said it has nothing to hide and it will not insist on any voting on the constitution of a parliamentary committee to probe the matter. The speaker, Mr. Shivraj Patil, made an impassioned appeal to both sides not to give the impression that the house could not resolve the issue. Expressing dismay over the continued deadlock, he asked why the house cannot discuss the issue when it is debated in other forums. He said many useful suggestions have been made and they will be considered to find an amicable solution to the problem.

Earlier, the opposition leaders expressed dissatisfaction over the way the government handled the issue. The leader of the opposition, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, said any discussion without appointing a joint parliamentary committee [JPC] will be fruitless. Mr. Sharad Yadav, Janata Dal, chided the government for what he said not listening to any of the suggestions made by the opposition to break the deadlock. The former prime minister Mr. Chandra Shekhar, suggested a meeting between the prime minister and leaders of major opposition parties. Broadly agreeing with their views, Mr. Somnath Chaterjee, CPI-M [Communist Party of India-Marxist]; Mr. Inderjit Gupta, CPI [Communist Party of India]; Mr. Arjun Singh, breakaway Congress-I; Mr. Rabi Ray and Mr. Abdul Ghafoor, both Samata Party; demanded an impartial and fair solution to the issue. Some of them also blamed the leader of the house for not taking initiative to resolve the impasse. Mr. Mani Shanker Aiyer, Mr. A. Charles, and Miss Mamata Banerjee, all Congress-I, said they are not against setting up any parliamentary committee to probe the matter, but the house should have a discussion first.

In the Rajya Sabha, for the 10th consecutive day, proceedings were stalled over the telecom tender issue. As soon as the house met, opposition members were on their feet demanding the appointment of a JPC to probe the alleged irregularities in granting of licenses to private parties for basic telecom services. Congress-I members criticized the opposition for not allowing the question hour to go on. The opposition went on shouting slogans demanding a JPC probe. The chairman, Mr. K.R. Narayanan, adjourned the house amidst the noisy scenes.

Article Views U.S. 'Conspiracy' in Kashmir

BK1512130495 Delhi HINDUSTAN in Hindi 12 Dec 95 p 6

[Article by Rai Singh]

[FBIS Translated Text] The statement given by Home Minister Chavan to the Rajya Sabha on 4th December not only jolted India, but the entire world — especially the United States. It alerted the United States to reality quite severely. Mr. Chavan, with all the responsibility and authority vested in him, not only leveled a direct charge against the United States, claiming it impeded India's effort to restore democracy in Kashmir, but also held the United States responsible for spreading terrorism in the State to serve its own selfish ends. He charged the United States of trying to gain a foothold in Kashmir through its influence over Pakistan. Perhaps this is the first time that any Indian Home Minister or any minister leveled charges at the United States in such absolute terms in Parliament. Before analyzing the reasons that prompted the home minister to give such a scathing statement it is necessary to review the U.S. reaction to his statement.

The U.S. Reaction: Instead of the U.S. Department of State reacting to the home minister's charges, the U.S. Embassy in India quickly issued a contradiction denying the home minister's charges, claiming they were "totally baseless." In order to display U.S. concern for the Kashmir issue, the U.S. Embassy spokesperson added that the United States has always encouraged India and Pakistan to continue with dialogue and to settle the issue through peaceful negotiations. The spokesperson also asserted that finding a solution to the Kashmir problem is essential and it is necessary to take into consideration the hopes and aspirations of the people of Kashmir. The question remains: Since when has the United States taken upon its shoulders the responsibility of fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of the people of Kashmir? It is the responsibility of the Government of India, because the State of Jammu and Kashmir is not an integral part of the United States, but of India. Moreover, the Government of India has never asked the United States to become an arbiter in the issue nor has India ever accepted the U.S. role in that capacity. That is why this explanation by the spokesperson of the U.S. Embassy shows that the United States intends to intervene in the affairs of Kashmir. Not only this, but the Government of India knows all about the valiant attempts by the U.S. Embassy's secret agents' to establish contact with the terrorist leaders active in Kashmir. These secret agents are acting under the guise of negotiating with the Al-Faran terrorists, who kidnapped four U.S. citizens [as received] about four or five months ago and still have them in its custody.

Solution to the Kashmir Problems: If the United States was truly concerned about the Kashmir problem and if it were a friendly country who cared for the sovereignty of India, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphel would never have termed Kashmir's merger with India as "disputed," or called the instrument of Kashmir's accession "baseless." Sadly enough senior officials of the Indian Government dismissed Raphel's most objectionable statement as being the expression of her personal opinion. Even the Indian Ambassador in Washington assured the Government of India that despite Robin Raphel's absurd statements, U.S. policy toward India remains unchanged. When President Clinton himself reiterated what Robin Raphel said, top officials of the Indian Government, the self-acclaimed intellectuals and advisers to the government, quickly fell silent. Before giving his famous 4th of December statement, the home minister should have taken action against these selfish elements eating into the very vitals of the official machinery and ensured their speedy exit from the system.

The home minister sensed the danger when he received a suggestion from the United States that candidates willing to participate in the proposed Kashmir election should not be forced to sign the affidavit nor should they be forced to declare on the electoral document that: "I am an Indian citizen and owe my total allegiance to the Constitution of India." The U.S. experts who had the temerity to offer this suggestion also outlined their logic for doing so. They argued that "if the conditions of owing allegiance to the Indian Constitution or asserting Indian citizenship could be removed from the electoral document for the Kashmir elections, then not only the entire leadership of the Hurriyat Conference, but also the top leaders of the Kashmiri terrorist groups would be able to actively participate in the Kashmir elections. This would not only make the election process in Kashmir a grand success but would also lead to the formation of a coalition government in Kashmir well-represented by all sections of the people of Kashmir." A cursory look might detect some sense in this U.S. logic but in reality, hidden behind this vicious argument lies a sinister U.S. conspiracy aimed at allowing Kashmiri terrorists, and even non-Kashmiri terrorists find valid ground to intrude into India under the pretext of these "fair" elections and unfurl their nefarious designs. Had the Government of India succumbed to any pressure or threat and accepted this most dangerous U.S. suggestion, the United States would have succeeded in its mission because a government constituted through such elections would have been a puppet of the U.S. Government and the United States would have used Kashmiri pawns to serve its selfish interests. Before dilating on the selfish interests of United States it is necessary to inform our readers that President Clinton wants an independent Kashmir inclusive of the Kashmir Valley, Laddakh and the Pakistani Occupied Kashmir to effectively serve U.S. interests.

What Does the United States Want: Currently the United States wants to establish an air base in the Pakistani Occupied Kashmir (POK) for which the U.S. experts have completed the survey work. U.S. Department of Defense experts are still touring the area. Leaders from the POK, Sardar Qayoom and others are still raising their voice against Pakistan's declaration of the Northern Region and adding it to its territory. Even Pakistan is against the United States' establishing an air base in the Northern Region because of the threat by China that if the United States establishes an air base in the Northern Region it may adversely affect Pakistan-Chinese relations. The chief intention of the United States for having an air base in the region is to keep an eye on China and Chinese leadership is quite aware of this move.

In light of these constraints Pakistan suggested to the United States that the latter establish an air base exclusively in the POK instead of in the Northern Region. Now U.S. Defense experts are surveying the POK and have even selected two sites. Before making the final decision concerning the air base, the United States wants to establish an independent Kashmir nation so that it will not have to depend on Pakistan. After doing so it wants to have a puppet government in independent Kashmir making it easier to exercise control over the region. Coincidentally this massive U.S. conspiracy tallies well with the Kashmir terrorists' demand of an "independent" Kashmir. That is the reason why the United States is confident that if the elections in Kashmir are held with the U.S. suggestions, then in the very first session of the newly constituted Kashmir Assembly it would have the resolution of "Kashmir's independence" passed with a majority vote. This way it would succeed in its mission of having an independent Kashmir. This stratagem would also preclude giving India an opportunity to raise any objection. The United States estimates that this scheme will help fulfill the hopes and aspirations of the people of Kashmir.

Thirty Terrorist Organizations: At present in Kashmir there are about thirty terrorist groups or organizations indulging in nefarious activities with Pakistan's aid. This aid does not include merely political or financial assistance, but also military training, weapons and explosives, and also looking after the families of these terrorists.

The Role of The ISI [Inter-Services Intelligence]: Now the question is: If U.S. agents and Kashmir terrorists have developed such a strong alliance, why is the United States still in need of the services of Pakistan's intelligence wing, the ISI? To appreciate this need we must examine the role the ISI plays in making the Taleban of Afghanistan such a formidable force. It is now clear that Pakistan is imparting training to the Kashmiri terrorists selected by the ISI, and that the ISI itself has imparted to the Taleban terrorists. Now Pakistan has achieved its objectives in Afghanistan through the Taleban. It is equally clear that Pakistan could not have achieved its objectives without the tacit approval of the United States. In other words, U.S. influence was paramount in Pakistan's constituting the Taleban force. It appears the Government of India also realizes that soon its security forces in Kashmir will have to face the well-trained terrorists, like the Taleban of Afghanistan. The Government of India should not forget that the thirteen provinces the Taleban won in Afghanistan were not won exclusively on the strength of Klashnikov rifles, but also on the strength of U.S. tanks, missiles, and fighter planes. This is the reason that Afghanistan demanded a session of the UN Security Council on the 5th December, to have the Security Council have Pakistan stop its intervention in Afghanistan under the guise of the Taleban.

Steps Urged To Expose Pakistani Role in Kashmir

BK2112100495 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0830 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The standing committee of parliament on external affairs has urged the government to take suitable measures to expose Pakistan's role in aiding and abetting terrorism in Kashmir.

In its eighth report presented to the Lok Sabha, the committee headed by Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee said that printed and audio-visual material on the issue should be supplied to Indian missions abroad for distribution among the opinion makers. The report said that the government should try to convince the Western countries and the Organization of the Islamic Conference about the need for exerting their influence on Islamabad to desist from encouraging terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

U.S.-Pakistan Ties May Improve Delhi-Tehran Ties

BK1812130895 Madras THE HINDU in English 16 Dec 95 p 13

[Article by C. Raja Mohan: "U.S., Pak Consensus May Bring India, Iran Closer"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The objective circumstances in the region, in particular the emerging strategic consensus between Washington and Islamabad, are likely to draw India and Iran closer, but New Delhi and Tehran will need to overcome a number of subjective factors before the full potential of bilateral cooperation is realised.

Iran faces the challenge of breaking out of the tightening containment policy of the United States. The Clinton Administration is stepping up its efforts to economically strangulate the Islamic Republic. This week, the U.S. Congress has begun the consideration of a Bill that will penalise companies of other nations that engage in the development of oil and natural gas fields in Iran. The West Europeans who want to trade with Iran have protested against the American move, but it remains to be seen how far the European Union will resist the American policy on Iran. On the political front, Tehran's relations with the Arab neighbours remain testy and the Clinton Administration has taken full advantage. The U.S. has also moved decisively into Central Asia and the Caucasus to the north of Iran, where Tehran had hoped to gain economically and politically. The U.S. is determined to cut Iran out of the new oil politics in the Caspian sea region. In Afghanistan, the United States has, along with Pakistan, been promoting the Taleban, which they hope will further squeeze Iran.

Many analysts in Iran argue that a strategy of "looking East" towards Asia, in particular Japan, China and India, provides an opportunity to beat the American ring of containment around it. Dr. Mahmood Sariolghalam, Director of the Institute for Middle East Studies, told The Hindu that in the Iranian political culture, "Asia has never been looked as a negative region. Iranian interaction with Asia has always bean positive." The traditional area of concern for Iran, the Middle East, according to Dr. Sariolghalam, "has been nothing but trouble." Asserting that there is a sense in Iran today that it must look at itself as an "Asian country," Dr. Sariolghalam said India had "acquired a new importance" in Iran's interaction with Asia.

For India too, Iran is emerging as a natural partner. India's own recent romance with the U.S. is now at a low ebb. The hopes in India for a steady improvement in the political relations with the U.S. after the Cold War have been dashed. The reemergence of the military relationship between Washington and Islamabad in the wake of the Brown Amendment has made it amply clear to New Delhi that India must stand on its own, strengthen its regional linkages and build an independent foreign policy.

In the recent months, India and Iran have indeed stepped their political exchanges. Yet the real movement towards building a new relationship has been painfully slow. A host of factors, external and domestic, are likely to constrain the rapid positive evolution of Indo-Iranian relations.

On strategic areas such as nuclear cooperation, the international environment, clearly imposes limits on what India can do with Iran. In the late 1980s and early 1990s there was consideration of a possible export of a nuclear research reactor from India to Iran. But pressure from the U.S. scuttled the proposal. Iran has now gone ahead with Russia and China in building its nuclear programme.

There have been some efforts to build cooperation in the defence area. But much of this effort now appears to be grounded. Recent reports indicate that the U.S. has been calling on India and Pakistan not to press ahead with serious defence Cooperation with Iran, at a time when Washington is seeking to isolate Iran.

The developments on the economic front are certainly brighter. A wide array of proposals on bilateral economic Cooperation are under consideration between Iran and India. Some of these, such as proposals to build joint pipelines for transportation of oil and gas, are gigantic in nature and are unlikely to fructify in the near future. India and Iran are also discussing a number of bilateral and trilateral projects for developing trade and transit arrangements to Central Asia. Iran and India need to quickly bring these proposals to a closure.

In terms of the overall political relationship, India will have to take into account the larger implications to its foreign policy of an expanded relationship with Iran. The likely reactions of the U.S. and the Arab states are clearly factors in Indian decision-making on Iran.

Although Iran may be moving towards a foreign policy based on national interest, its domestic ideological compulsions, in particular the declared focus on the Islamic world, do bring some complications into its approach to India. Whatever its current differences with Pakistan over the developments in Afghanistan, Iran cannot afford to be seen as siding with India in its disputes with Pakistan, specifically on the Kashmir issue. The political leadership in India and Iran will have to demonstrate considerable diplomatic skill to overcome the limitations and build a mutually beneficial relationship.

Mukherjee Holds Talks With Nepalese Counterpart

BK2112035295 Delhi ISI Diplomatic Information Service in English 1446 GMT 20 Dec 95

["Press Release" — ISI Headline]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Mr. P.C. Lohani, minister of foreign affairs of Nepal, accompanied by Mr. K.B, Shreshtha, the foreign secretary of Nepal, called on the external affairs minister, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, today. This is the first official ministerial visit from Nepal to India since the new government led by Sher Bahadur Deuba assumed charge in Nepal. The discussions, which were held in a friendly and cordial atmosphere, were centered on means of expanding cooperation in areas ranging from water resources, power, trade and transit, promotion of investment and joint ventures, etc.

New Delhi

20 December 1995

Iran

Khamene'i Says U.S. Threats 'Self-Mockery'

LD2012174495 Tehran IRNA in English 1650 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Dec. 20, IRNA — On the occasion of the grand anniversary of Maba'th (27 Rajab), the divine appointment of Hazrat Mohammad (Sawa) as the last messenger to mankind, the leader of the Islamic revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed 'Ali Khamene'i, felicitated the nation and the Muslim world today.

Addressing a gathering of senior state officials including the heads of the executive, legislative and judiciary branches, the leader said it is a fact which no one, not even the enemies can deny, that the Iranian Muslims by their efforts to establish the Islamic system and revive Islamic values in society, are treading the path of the prophet.

He called Maba'th as the "greatest day in the history of mankind" and said that as the Iranian people are aware divine values play a significant role in the life of society and help realize the goal of equality and social justice.

He said the psychological problems and spiritual vacuum in the western society was a result of ignoring social justice by the capitalist systems.

The leader said that the key to the success of the Islamic system lay in faith.

Even if the United States as a world superpower, was to plot against Iran with the help of other developed countries and in cooperation with weak governments who have reduced themselves to mere puppets, "it will not be able to inflict a serious blow, because the Iranian people are true to their faith and observe religious and spiritual values in their daily lives," he said.

Ayatollah Khamene'i referring to the solidarity and strong links between the Iranian officials and masses, termed the U.S. threats against Iran as "self-mockery."

He said the threats of American statesmen against Iran are becoming "frivolous and indecent to the extent that they are talking of subjects which are considered improper and unacceptable by world public opinion."

Elaborating, the leader pointed out the recent open call by the U.S. officials to their congress to allocate a budget for carrying out terrorist measures against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

"This is while the (U.S.) mercenaries have repeatedly tasted the iron fist of the Iranian nation," he added.

Before the leader's address, President Hojjatoleslam Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani in a brief speech termed the as a divine blessing and added that the Iranian Muslims have the honour of being the propagators of the grand message entrusted to prophet Mohammad (Sawa) by the almighty this day.

Prophet Mohammad (Sawa), whose universal mission for mankind was prophesied by all previous prophets including Abraham, Moses (see Dueteronomy 18:18,19), Isaiah (42:6-11), Jesus (St. John where the paraclete or comforter is mentioned), was formally commissioned as the last and final messenger to mankind at the age of 40 years in Mecca (609 A.D.).

His coming was also foretold in the scriptures of non-Abrahamic religions such as the Zoroastrians and the Hindus, and his appointment occured at a time when humanitarian values had sunk rock-bottom and ignorance had spread everywhere.

However, the gradual revelation of the Holy Koran which started this day when the archangel Gabriel brought the first verses, were to revolutionize not only Mecca and the Arabian Peninsula, but the whole world as well.

Islam, which means peace and a healthy way of life, and which was the theme of the messages of all previous prophets, today continues it liberating task around the world, unshackling the chains of race, language, class and psychology, put on the humankind by oppressive manmade systems.

U.S. Said Projecting Nation as Regional 'Threat'

LD1812103695 Tehran IRNA in English
0916 GMT 18 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Dec. 18, IRNA — Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, especially after the 1991 Persian Gulf war, the United States has been attempting to impose its will on other countries with the assumption that it is the world's only superpower, a morning daily wrote monday.

Referring to recent remarks made by Deputy Foreign Minister Hoseyn Sheykholeslam that Iran is ready to sign a non-aggression pact with the Arab states of the Persian Gulf to boost security and regional cooperation, the English-language TEHRAN TIMES added, "in the sensitive region of the Persian Gulf, the U.S. has augmented its military presence in order to play its oil card against its emerging post-cold war economic rivals."

In order to justify its presence in the region, Washington has inculcated a perception of danger in the minds of the rulers of the Arab states, the editorial underlined, noting that, "the U.S. has spared no effort in projecting Iran as a threat to the security of the Persian Gulf states."

As a result, it reiterated, America has succeeded in augmenting its interference in regional affairs and sending a considerable amount of armaments, turning this region into an explosive spot on the world map. The only alternative to U.S. meddling is regional cooperation and coordination, it stressed, adding Iran has gone an extra mile for peace. Sheykholeslam's statement regarding a non- aggression pact is a sign that the Islamic Republic is ready to sacrifice "individual interests" for the sake of "collective interests", the article stated.

It concluded by saying that it is time the Arab states of the Persian Gulf responded to Iran's sincere calls for regional cooperation, or they will have to take recourse in an arms build-up which will neither serve their national interests nor save them from any probable crisis, as was the case during Iraq's aggression in Kuwait.

Foreign Calls for Embargo, Sanctions Discussed

LD1512123795 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian
0400 GMT 15 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Dear listeners, welcome to our weekly programme, "Review of foreign radio broadcasts." [passage omitted] The willingness of international oil companies to cooperate with Iran by signing bilateral and multilateral agreements with our country has eventually rekindled the grudge and jealousy of some U.S. senators affiliated to Zionism. They have therefore embarked on new measures to boycott these oil companies. Of course, their measures have not gone beyond the recommendation of a U.S. Senate subcommittee. Evidence also indicates that the latest recommendation is not as strong as some previous proposals.

Nevertheless, some foreign radio stations, particularly the radio of the Zionist regime, have tried to make a mountain out of this molehill. They have concluded that the preliminary talks on a possible oil embargo by the international companies will practically lead to tighter economic sanctions against Iran. The Zionist regime radio, in its Persian service, says, quote: The U.S. Banking Commission, at the end of a special session held to discuss the expansion of sanctions against the Islamic Government in Iran, has decided to tighten the sanctions, and has expressed support for the law which proposes to punish foreign companies which invest in Iranian oil and gas.

Meanwhile, the Persian service of Radio France, on the same issue, has said that the U.S. Senate Banking Commission has empowered that country's president to impose sanctions against the foreign companies, if necessary. It is obvious that the vote by the U.S. Senate's Banking Commission cannot be implemented unless it is approved by the House of Representatives and the Senate itself. [passage omitted]

At the same time, it is interesting that the Persian service of Voice of America is depicting a picture which is precisely contrary to the uncompromising stance being presented. In a program this week, quoting one of its experts, the radio said, quote: It just makes sense for the United States, eventually some time, to have an effective strategic relationship with Iran. It would make the whole region much more stable. Of course, I realize that at the present the Iranians are not willing to do this, but I do not think the United States has explored all the possibilities to start talks with Iran. In my opinion this should take place just for the sake of it.

Dear listeners, we end this week's programme. God be with you, dear ones until next week. Good day.

IRGC Tests Missiles, Artillery in Exercises

LD2112121595 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 1030 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Missile and artillery defense exercises of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps [IRGC] started this morning in the presence of a number of the country's top military commanders and with the holy codename of Ya Aba 'Abdallah al-Husayn, peace be upon him, near the city of Qom. In the war games, which demonstrated the self-sacrifices of the combatants of Islam in eight years of holy defense, the brave men of the Guards Corps, in an area of considerable size and using ground-to-air units shot down pilotless aircraft of an imaginary enemy.

In an interview with the Central News Unit, [IRGC commander] Major General Mohsen Reza'i said the following about the staging and aims of the exercises:

[Begin recording] [Reza'i] These are ground defense exercises staged by the IRGC, the devotee of velayat-e faqih [supreme jurisconsult], which are being staged out here — we are near Qom — using all the anti-aircraft facilities at the disposal of the Corps.

We obtained some of the facilities toward the end of the war, so we did not have the opportunity to use them in the war. Some of the missiles and new units we received after the war ended. We have rebuilt and renovated all of them ourselves and made them battle-ready without the slightest foreign involvement. Today was a suitable opportunity in the Guards Corps Week to stage the anti-aircraft exercises.

One of our missiles was just fired correctly. It went toward the target. We identified the target at 270 km, before it could enter the area and was shot down by our missile.

[Unidentified Correspondent] Will the IRGC stage other war games during Guards Corps Week?

[Reza'i] We will have a naval exercise in the Bushehr and Bandar- e 'Abbas area which will involve our newly-obtained fast boats, or our old boats which we have rebuilt. [end recording] [video shows anti-aircraft guns and missile launchers in action, interview with Reza'i]

Radio Notes Afghan, Pakistani Speeches at UN

LD2012155495 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Pashto 1230 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Afghanistan considers Pakistan the cause of the continuing clashes in Kabul. In an address to the UN General Assembly, Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister Abdorrahim Ghafurzai condemned the Pakistan Government's interference in his country's internal affairs and called the interference the real cause of the continuing clashes in his country.

Noting the Taleban's antipeople and self-seeking acts against the Afghan people, the Afghan deputy foreign minister said: Hidden hands are seeking to disrupt national accord, stability, and calm in Afghanistan. He called the thwarting of UN efforts to achieve peace in Afghanistan an aim of the Pakistan Government, and gave Pakistan's unilateral decision to transfer its embassy to Jalalabad as an evidence of his assertion.

At the end, Ghafurzai once again announced the Rabbani government's readiness to transfer power to a broadly-based and credible council, and considered a complete end to hostilities and a cease-fire in Afghanistan necessary to achieve this.

Pakistan's permanent representative at the United Nations described Pakistan's important role during the jihad and struggle of the Muslim nation of Afghanistan against the former Soviet Union. Noting that there are one and a half millions refugees in Pakistan, Ahmad Kamal said: The continuing fighting in Afghanistan is the main reason why these refugees are not returning to their country.

On Pakistan's assistance to the Taleban and its interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs, he asserted that Pakistan has no inclination to a certain party or group, and that Pakistan has tried to stay neutral and not to interfere in Afghanistan's internal affairs. [passage omitted]

Armenian President Stresses Economic Relations

LD1812091895 Tehran IRNA in English 0625 GMT 18 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Zahedan, Sistan-Baluchestn Prov., Dec. 18, IRNA — Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosyan here Sunday [17 December] stressed that his country attaches great importance to its economic relations with Iran.

On his way home from India, he had a stop over at Zahedan airport where he appreciated the Islamic Republic's balanced stance in regional developments.

He underscored the need to promote bilateral ties in different economic, trade, cultural, scientific and communication areas.

Commenting on Iran's major role in establishing peace and stability in the Central Asian region, Petrosyan took note of the great efforts exerted by Tehran in settling the Karabakh conflict.

He stated that Iran was among the first countries which formally recognized the Armenian Republic and opened its embassy in Yerevan.

Free Trade Zone Chief Gives Update on Progress

LD1812162395 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 1530 GMT 18 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] During the past six months, 660 applications were made for investment in free trade zones. The secretary of the Supreme Council of the Free Trade and Industry Zones said in an interview with our correspondent today: The handing over of land and transport of machinery has started in 200 cases. Work on 100 buildings is also in progress.

Mr. Alviri said: The fields in which the factories under construction in free trade zones will be involved include industries, household goods, chemicals, computers, naval vessels, and cement. He added: Domestic investors are making the lion's share of the investments.

In accordance with the newly announced facilities, exports to free trade zones will be possible without any red tape. Exports from free trade zones to the rest of the world only require foreign currency deposits in proportion to the foreign currency worth of the goods. Imports from free trade zones do not require letters of credit and order registration in proportion to usage of domestic resources. [as heard]

Editorial Warns of Budgetary Problems

NC2012135895 Mashhad KHORASAN in Persian 10 Dec 95 pp 1, 11

[Editorial: "The Second Embargo and a Political Glance at the 1996 Budget!"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The presentation of the 1375 [year beginning 21 March 1996] budget will undoubtedly generate debates and assessments in the various domestic as well as in foreign circles. However the most important point to which the Islamic Majles should pay attention in its appraisal of the 1375 budget is that this requires more political expertise than economic expertise. We hope the Islamic Majles will be able to carry out this momentous responsibility.

A point that the deputies of the Islamic Majles should heed is the possibility of the emergence of unforeseen crises. We should note, inter alia, that the United States is seeking to intensify its economic embargo on Iran and this is currently being studied by the U.S. Congress. This plan is favored by the U.S. administration and is known in U.S. domestic circles as the second economic embargo of Iran.

The United States intends to implement punitive measures against those non-U.S. oil companies that are cooperating with the Islamic Republic of Iran in the oil and gas sector. How realistic this plan is or whether its benefits will outweigh the political and economic costs to the United States is another matter. However, it is quite obvious that the United States is determined to step up economic pressures against Iran because it has suffered defeat and blows to its prestige from Iran on the international level.

In any case, it is worth noting that despite some domestic problems, Iran's economy is like a ship that is forging ahead on the tempestuous waves of international policies. Therefore the 1375 budget should be strong enough to handle all eventualities in grappling with major and minor crises.

The budget revenue anticipated from exports of oil and non-oil commodities and other factors should not be considered as definitive, because this has been belied by past experience. Of course, the government believes that it has taken the necessary steps in this regard in the 1375 budget. The Budget Bill stipulates that the government's foreign exchange earnings from exports of crude oil and oil byproducts will amount to $15.9 billion if the price per barrel is $15.50. It assumes that it will have a surplus of $5 billion after defraying its expenses.

If even half of this income were to be spent on the ensuring the country's security, it would have a surplus of $2.5 billion to boost its foreign exchange deposits in banks abroad, which will facilitate foreign trade, imports, ameliorate our foreign exchange policies, strengthen the value of the rial against the more reliable foreign currencies, and promote similar benefits.

By formulating such a foreign exchange program in view its income and expenditures, and by holding that the Majles should permit the foreign exchange allocations of the administrative bodies to be determined by the government itself and not submitted to the Majles along with the Budget Bill, the government is trying to keep some room to maneuver in confronting possible crises.

All this depends on whether the government's projections of its expected income come true. Therefore the Islamic Majles deputies should assess the Budget Bill for 1375 in the light of these issues and possibilities and base their efforts on known facts and figures.

Nationals Abroad Urged To Repay Their 'Debt'

LD1612111495 Tehran IRNA in English
1050 GMT 16 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Dec. 16, IRNA — The English-language daily, 'TEHRAN TIMES', wrote in its editorial Saturday [16 December] that Iranians abroad should spare no effort in repaying their debt to their country.

Stressing that a citizen of a country is virtually a debtor to his nation, the paper said the government should facilitate the participation of Iranians abroad in the process of national development.

The daily continued that the government has thus far taken several crucial steps in this direction, but they are not enough and Iranian expatriates have not responded as much as the nation has expected.

"Iranians abroad ought not forget that their fellow countrymen suffered much during the eight years of imposed war. During those days most Iranians abroad lived a peaceful life away from the tumult of war. The time is now ripe to compensate for the past," the daily concluded.

Majles Deputy on Contribution of 'Technocrats'

LD1712125095 Tehran IRNA in English
1146 GMT 17 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Dec. 17, IRNA — Majles deputy from Shiraz, Qasem Sho'leh Sa'di, in an interview with the English-language daily IRAN NEWS printed on Sunday [17 December] said that independent technocrats believe that any task must be given to those who specialize in that field, and "our holy Koran also commands us to do so."

He also said, "the independent technocrats believe that within a political context, our national interests must be clearly defined and explained."

According to IRAN NEWS, the deputy was critical of too many centers of decision making in the country.

Sa'di said he firmly believes that slogan and reasoning should be combined and the country should be managed in a systematic and regular manner.

"We technocrats insist on our belief that political parties should be formed in the country. We feel ourselves fully committed to the observance and enforcement of human rights as well as individual and social freedom, and emphasize that these principles should be observed by the government," the deputy said.

He added, "all of us has somehow contributed to the victory and continuation of the Islamic revolution."

Sho'leh Sa'di said much effort has been made to taint the reputation of the technocrats, adding, but one cannot ignore the fact that the technocrats are also Muslims and a devotee of the system.

Sa'di a member of the foreign relations commission of the Majles said technocrats believe that the interests of the Islamic government which is the propelling power behind all the Muslims in the world should be safeguarded.

Commenting on foreign policy, the Majles deputy said, "technocrats believe that the country's diplomacy should be active and based on a long-term strategy that can protect the national interests, sovereignty, and dignity of the Islamic government and any link with other nations should be based on such a foreign strategy."

Concerning cultural values of the revolution, the MP said technocrats believe in the genuine Islamic culture and do not accept any negligence or disregard of such values.

He said technocracy means respecting the different expertise needed to manage the country, and these experts and specialists should meet the different needs of the nation in an organized manner.

"An erroneous and discriminating image has been drawn of the technocrats in this country either by party groupings or through a lack of understanding of issues related to the technocrats," Sa'di said.

The technocrats have declared that they are not affiliated with either Jame-h Rowhaniyat-e Mobarez (JRM) or Majma-e Rowhaniyun-e Mobarez (MRM), the right and left wings of the ruling party in the Majles.

Sa'di said the past political and economic performance of the right and left wings of the Majles have provided enough information to people to form an opinion about them, "we, technocrats, likewise, declare our opinions and programs and it is the people's vote that will have the final say."

The Shiraz representative said, "some people continuously ignore the existence of independent technocrats or try to undermine them. If there are no independent technocrats, or if these technocrats cannot attract the people's vote, then why do these people worry? Do they believe in what they are saying?"

The MP said in the third Majles a group of independent deputies formed a wing and supported the government of President 'Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani which was under pressure by some parties in the parliament.

He added in the fourth Majles, also, the technocrats intended to form a faction but no such wing was formed be cause they were afraid of becoming a target for attack by their opponents.

Reportage, Commentary on Upcoming Majles Elections

Movahhedi-Savoji: Must Be 'Constructive'

96LA0021A Tehran ABRAR in Persian 15 Oct 95 pp 1, 2

[FBIS Translated Text] News Service—The chairman of the Majles Councils and Domestic Affairs Commission invited all of the people to participate actively and widely in the forthcoming Majles elections.

Movahhedi-Savoji, deputy from Tehran, asked all the officials who will be participating in the elections for the Fifth Majles to observe complete neutrality, not to permit any kind of intervention contrary to regulations or the election laws, and to work solely within the law and regulations to make the elections as correct and sound as possible.

Speaking with ABRAR's parliamentary correspondent, he said that the forthcoming atmosphere for the Majles elections will be sound and constructive. He said: All of the organizations, including the Ministry of the Interior, the Council of Guardians, the judicial power, and the police must adhere completely to the laws on holding the elections and they must inform the public as well.

The chairman of the Majles Councils and Domestic Affairs Commission emphasized that any kind of disruption or confusion that might disrupt the sound atmosphere of the elections must be prevented. With reference to the Militant Clerics Association [Majma'e Rowhaniyun-e Mobarez], he said: There is no special reason why this group should be disappointed with participation in the forthcoming elections. If the reason is that they were not elected in the Fourth Majles, the logic of that is not apparent. This is actually the essence of elections. No group or person taking part in the elections knows whether it will be elected or not. We must not be angry with the public. If they do not vote for someone, there is definitely a specific reason. I believe that the Militant Clerics Association should propose someone for the next Majles term who has no problem with regard to learning, ethics, or record of service. However, there is no good reason for them not to participate as a group in the forthcoming elections. In any case, they must act in whatever way they think best.

Elsewhere in his talk, the deputy from Tehran added: Any person may participate in this round of elections whose competence has been studied, after he registers his name, by the executive and supervision councils. Even someone whose competence was not confirmed in the last round of elections may register in this round, and perhaps he will be confirmed this time.

With respect to the reason for holding the elections late in the month of Esfand [20 February - 20 March], Movahhedi-Savoji said: Holding the elections in this season will give an adequate opportunity to conduct the first and second stages. For example, if someone is elected in the first stage and does not obtain the minimum required percentage of votes, there will be an adequate opportunity for this task to be done in a timely manner in the second stage. Moreover, if the elections are delayed until early spring, a large number will not be able to take part in this important event because of the Now Ruz [Persian new year] holiday when many will be travelling and sightseeing.

Nurbakhsh on Economic Policy's Effects

96LA0021B Tehran ABRAR in Persian 15 Oct 95 p 1

[FBIS Translated Text] Tehran (IRNA)—The chief of the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran discussed the effects of the results of the elections for Iran's Majles and the president of the republic on the nation's economic programs. He said: The nation's Second Five-Year Plan has been approved as law by the Islamic Consultative Majles. I am certain that the government and the new Majles will also continue implementing the law and the economic program.

He added: The holding of elections will not cause a total change in these policies because the new deputies will not necessarily revoke the existing economic laws.

Sobhani-Nia Views Election Outcome

96LA0021C Tehran ABRAR in Persian 16 Oct 95 pp 1, 2

[FBIS Translated Text] Parliamentary Service—A member of the Majles Speaker's Council announced: The ones who will win the vote in the elections for the Fifth Majles will be the ones whose words and slogans are closer to reality.

Hojjat ol-Eslam Hoseyn Sobhani-Nia, deputy from Neyshabur and reporter for the Majles Foreign Policy Commission, said: Of course one cannot yet judge which of the existing factions in the country will triumph in the forthcoming Majles elections, but it can be said that the candidates who say the most realistic things will inspire more confidence, and votes favoring them will go into the ballot boxes.

He said that the role of the Majles elections in improving the nation's political, social, and economic situation will be very effective and important. He said: If the Majles believes in continuing the foreign and domestic policies that it has been pursuing, the thinking prevailing in the next Majles will be very positive and hopeful, and we will have no problem implementing it. If they act in contradiction with this procedure, things will come to a standstill and we will see vast domestic and foreign changes at various levels.

Speaking with ABRAR's parliamentary correspondent, the deputy from Neyshabur characterized the atmosphere for the coming elections as political. With regard to the reason for this, he said: Actually the elections themselves create this situation, especially now when we have been holding these elections for about 17 years. Our people's political instinct and understanding have increased, and those seeking involvement in the nation's public life such as Majles candidates have become more numerous. These factors reinforce the political atmosphere in society.

The member of the Majles Speaker's Council mentioned the Tehran Militant Clergy Association [Jame'h Rowhaniyat-e Mobarez] and the Militant Cleric's Association [Majma'-e Rowhaniyun-e Mobarez] and said he regarded the vice regency of the chief jurisconsult and the full acceptance of the Constitution as the focus of social thought in the next Majles. He noted: An effort should be made so that we have less fomenting of discord and concentrate more on values so that a sound and constructive atmosphere will prevail in the elections. The factions on the right and the left must not deter us from our sacred Islamic goals. Both are the ideas of religious and concerned forces who must understand one another better, try to reduce the confusion and guide society in the desired direction.

Sobhani-Nia discussed the recent changes at various levels in the Ministry of the Interior. He said: Because of the approaching elections to the Fifth Majles, the executive organizations have been subjected to closer scrutiny and special attention is being paid to society's intellectual trends. I believe that these changes began suddenly and are being pursued with special political motivations. This has attracted the attention of the various political trends.

Besharati on Ministry's Impartiality

96LA0021D Tehran ABRAR in Persian 16 Oct 95 p 2

[FBIS Translated Text] At a gathering of deputy ministers and staff managers in the Ministry of the Interior, the minister of the interior emphasized again the need to adhere to laws, regulations, and the principle of neutrality in the elections for the Fifth Islamic Consultative Majles.

The Public Relations Office of the Ministry of the Interior reports that Mr. Besharati discussed this ministry's responsibility in holding the elections. He said: For us, the principle of the elections and an outstanding public turnout at the polls are important, and what the people vote for and choose must be respected.

The minister of the interior emphasized again the need for complete neutrality among the Ministry of the Interior's managers in the lines and the staffs during the days of the elections for the Islamic Consultative Majles. He said: Today countless numbers of enemies and friends are watching our country and our elections to see how we will conduct the elections. Therefore, holding peaceful and sound elections with active public participation will please our friends and smash the plots of the enemies of the Islamic revolution.

He emphasized that staging any kind of gathering, march, or demonstration requires authorization from the Ministry of the Interior. He said: Based on the statements from the late imam and the exalted leader, it is incumbent upon all the people to adhere to the regulations and laws of the sacred government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and it is not acceptable for any individual or group to fail to adhere to the laws and regulations.

Besharati added: If individuals plan to march or demonstrate on various occasions, they can go to the Ministry of the Interior and submit a request for authorization. If the officials agree, there is no barrier to holding the marches and demonstrations. Otherwise, in accordance with its lawful responsibilities, the Ministry of the Interior will prevent the gatherings and marches.

Zavareh'i: People Will Back Clergy

96LA0046E Tehran 'ASR-E MA in Persian 18 Oct 95 p 8

[FBIS Translated Text] Seyyed Reza Zavareh'i, one of the legal specialists on the Guardian Council, gave an interview to the English language newspaper IRAN TIMES, printed in Tehran, concerning the approaching Majles elections. He said: The people will generally vote for candidates such as the Militant Clergy, for their performance in the revolution can be confirmed.

Continuing, Zavareh'i expressed his support for the Militant Clergy Association [Jame'h Rowhaniyat-e Mobarez], and said: The Militant Clergy will assuredly form a coalition with the other Islamic groups such as the Islamic Society of Engineers and the Islamic Society of Students.

Political observers believe that the statement by Zavareh'i, as one of the legal specialists of the Guardian Council, is inconsistent with the principle of this council's impartiality.

Based on Article 99 of the Constitution and the provisions of Article 3 of the Election Law, supervision of the Majles elections is the duty of the Guardian Council. On this basis, for any member of the Guardian Council to lean—even implicitly—to individuals or parties volunteering to take part in the elections undermines this council's supervisory role.

Liberation Movement Discussed

96LA0066B Tehran IRAN NEWS in English 19 Nov 95 pp 1, 9

[Article by M. Serjooie]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran—The fifth term of the Majles (Parliament) is of paramount importance due to its direct relationship with the upcoming presidential elections, MP from Neyshabur Hojjat ol-Eslam Hoseyn Sobhani-Nia told IRAN NEWS.

"But," he went on to add, "gaining a majority of the Majles seats hinges on various factors, including past performance, realistic slogans free from sentiments and emotions, acceptance of true principles and values of the Revolution such as adherence to absolute 'Velayat-e Faqih' and the Constitution."

He predicted that the majority of the present MPs will be reelected to the fifth term of the Majles.

The MP said that his estimation is based on the views of the people, the right wing's positive past performance which has concurred with the country's development programs and the guidelines of the Eminent Leadership.

Sobhani-Nia, a member of the Majles Foreign Policy Commission as well as the Board of Managers, added that some existing intellectual trends intend to undermine the present Majles majority in order to infuse the people with their own non-realistic views.

He noted, "if the left wing thinks it can thus come to power, it is very much mistaken, for if the people conclude that the right wing cannot do anything for them, they will not turn to the left wing either since they have not as yet forgotten its past performance."

Then there are the technocrats who believe that all issues can be solved by mere recourse to expertise, the MP pointed out.

The public does not accept expertise devoid of commitment, and cannot conceive that the country's political and economic officials be possessed of specialty alone, he stressed.

This is because expertise alone is not the key to all problems, commitment is also required, he marked adding that many officials and MPs are endowed with both expertise and commitment.

The line of thought in the fifth Majles should be in tune with "Velayat-e Faqih" and must be compatible with the Second Five-Year Develpment Plan, the MP noted.

Sobhani-Nia went on to say, "I believe favorable results will be achieved in such a Majles, if one or several individuals from the Liberation Movement are elected after being declared qualified by the Guardians Council."

The MP explained that their presence in the Majles would have a very positive effect, since their views are opposite to those of the government, provided that they act according to the Constitution and Islamic principles.

There is a majority in the Majles which insures the overall soundness of the affairs of the legislative body, he emphasized.

Fairness Said To Preserve Credibility

96LA0065B Tehran IRAN NEWS in English
29 Oct 95 p 2

[Editorial titled: "Democratically Elected Majles—A Source of Credibility for the System"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Hectic activities for the campaigns of Majles elections are being noticed across the country and most prominently in the capital.

Political circles in Iran are attaching extraordinary importance to the elections for the fifth term of the legislative body which has crucial tasks ahead of it in the context of vital changes in the world order as well as social and economic developments at home.

Another special characteristic of the 8 March elections is the emanation of a new faction on the political horizon of the Islamic Republic. The new faction comprising Iranian technocrats is very much active for fielding their candidates for the Majles with confidence that they would be able to attract the attention of the voters.

The Rowhaniyat [Tehran Militant Clergy Association] and the Rowhaniyun [Militant Clerics Association] are other factions which are busy canvassing in favor of their candidates particularly in the rural areas. These two groups actively participated in the fourth term of the parliament. Unlike previous elections, [the] Rowhaniyun are keeping the names of their candidates secret or at least they are not publicly declaring the names.

We wish that all factions should remain active at the political scene of the country and participate in the crucial elections of Majles. The Rowhaniyun should also make the name[s] of their candidates public so that an atmosphere of 'confidence' may prevail during the election campaign.

As we earlier mentioned in this column, two institutions play crucial roles in holding the elections: The Guardians Council and the Interior Ministry.

In the light of growing political awareness of the masses it is expected that the Guardians Council will follow an open-door policy while screening the names of the candidates. We will definitely discourage any effort from any quarter which may weaken the vital institution of the Guardians Council. But we do expect that the honorable members of the Council be fully aware that Iranian voters now have a 16-year experience of using their domocratic rights and they know very well who deserves to get a seat at the Majles.

The Interior Ministry has a direct role in holding general elections in the country and the nation rightly expects strict neutrality from this second most important agency for the implementation of the basic rights of the people. Much has been said about the neutral stance of the Interior Ministry and we wish that it should not ring a hollow bell.

We note also the tremendous responsibility shouldered by the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) and the Friday prayer leaders for creating a healthy election atmosphere particularly in the rural areas by refraining from advocating one particular faction or candidate.

We all have to keep in mind the fact that the credibility of the Majles is the guarantee of the safety, security and longevity of our system of government. We should not forget that the credibility of the Majles is only preserved through free and fair elections.

Guardian Council's Duties Viewed

LD1712120895 Tehran IRNA in English
1040 GMT 17 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Dec. 17, IRNA — The presence of a large number of candidates and the freedom of the people to vote for their chosen candidates are among the basic rights of the public, a morning daily wrote in its editorial Sunday [17 December].

Referring to Tehran's Friday prayers this week addressed by Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, the English-language IRAN NEWS commented on the grave responsibility of the Guardians Council.

Undoubtedly, the Guardians Council, based upon the duty vested on it by the Constitution, has the right to confirm the qualifications of Majles (parliament) candidates, it stressed, adding that a great deal of publicity was raised especially at the threshold of the fourth term Majles polls, for the approval or rejection of candidates in accordance to their qualifications.

"Election time, of course, is a period of extensive efforts by political groups in all countries to justify possible defeats in parliamentary polls by attributing the defeat to factors outside the party or group," it underlined.

Following the fourth term Majles elections, the article stated, the Guardians Council faced a great deal of pressure as it did not declare the reasons as to why some candidates were rejected.

Of course, it noted, the Guardians Council's reasoning that it did not intend to disclose and publicize the private or ethical matters related to the prospective candidates, was in full compliance with Islamic and ethical principles.

The paper reiterated that a politician or technocrat or even a Majles representative whose qualifications are rejected by the Guardians Council sense the duty they shoulder before their constituencies and have the right to demand disclosure of reasons for the rejection of their candidacy.

It concluded by saying that 16 years after the victory of the revolution, the people have gained enough political awareness and maturity to be able to choose the best among different candidates.

Pakistan

Officials on Possible Indian Nuclear Test

Assembly Condemns Test Plans

BK2012143095 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 1400 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Sindh Assembly in a session has condemned India for its plans for conducting nuclear test in areas adjacent to Pakistani border. A motion was moved by the provincial minister for law and parliamentary affairs, Pir Mazharul Haq, following a point of order raised by a member of the house. He said Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has already given statements on issue and Indian activity is being closely monitored and taken care of.

India Responsible for 'Consequences'

BK2012155095 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in Urdu 1500 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Foreign Minister Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali has said that if India decides to conduct one more nuclear test, then it would be singly responsible for the consequences in South Asia. Answering reporters' questions at a news conference in Islamabad this evening, he said he had made this point clear to Indian thinkers and intellectuals in New Delhi yesterday.

Replying to another question, Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali said that even though Pakistan has achieved success in the field of nuclear technology, it is against nuclear tests.

When his attention was drawn to reports about Indian preparations to test-fire the Prithvi missile in Rajasthan, he said these Indian statements are implausible, because New Delhi keeps on changing its stand.

Deployment To 'Raise Tension'

BK2012163895 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 1600 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The foreign minister has said although Pakistan has made a breakthrough in nuclear technology, it is against nuclear tests. Talking to newsmen in Islamabad this evening, Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali said if India explodes another nuclear bomb, it will solely be responsible for the consequences. He said deployment of Prithvi missile will definitely raise tension in South Asia. The foreign minister said Pakistan will equally respond to the deployment of Indian missiles, remaining within the scope of Missile Technology Control Regime. India will not be allowed to take advantage over Pakistan.

The foreign minister, who attended the OIC [Organization of the Islamic Conference] meeting in Guinea, said the conference adopted a resolution supporting the Kashmir issue.

He said Pakistan will be providing about 1,500 troops to Bosnia and negotiations in this connection are continuing in Brussels. He said during his visit to Cairo, he called upon President Husni Mubarak, who expressed satisfaction over the steps Pakistan has taken after the blast in the Egyptian Embassy.

Sardar Asif Ahmad Ali, who also attended the SAARC [South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation] foreign ministers conference in New Delhi, said Pakistan, Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh called for amending the SAARC Charter to discuss the resolution of bilateral issues and problems. He said SAARC cannot move forward speedily without resolution of bilateral issues.

Spokesman: India Must Realize 'Perils'

BK2112112695 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 1100 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Pakistan has reminded the international community that it is imperative that Indian leadership be made to realize the perils of a second nuclear test.

A Foreign Office spokesman, briefing newsmen in Islamabad this afternoon, warned that a second nuclear test by India, apart from jeopardizing regional and global nonproliferation, would be inconsistent with New Delhi's own declarations of commitment to the goal of nuclear disarmament and nuclear-free world.

Test 'Inconsistent' With Policy

BK2112134495 Islamabad PTV Television Network in English 1300 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Pakistan has said resumption of nuclear testing by India will seriously disturb regional stability, undermine international efforts toward nuclear nonproliferation, and leave adverse effects on the ongoing efforts to conclude a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in Geneva.

A Foreign Office spokesman told newsmen at a briefing in Islamabad today that such a step would be inconsistent with India's own declarations of commitment to the goal of nuclear disarmament. He called upon international community, particularly major powers, to prevent India from its ambitious plans.

[Begin spokesman recording] It is our hope that the international community, particularly the major powers who have been endeavoring to promote the cause of nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament, would do everything to prevent India from resuming nuclear testing. It is time for the world to support Pakistan's sincere endeavors to promote nuclear nonproliferation, arms control, and security in South Asia. [end recording]

Officials on 'Irresponsible Steps'

BK2112044895 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in Urdu 0200 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Privatization Commission Chairman Syed Naved Qamar has taken strong exception to reports of Indian plans to conduct a nuclear blast and said this development should be taken very seriously. He said such irresponsible steps will give rise to serious ramifications and will create an imbalance in the whole region. In a statement in Islamabad yesterday, he said India's decision to acquire missiles from Russia that are capable of carrying nuclear warheads is also a matter of concern. He said every action has a reaction, and if India does not change its hostile attitude other countries in the region will be forced to revise their national security strategies.

Khalid Ahmad Khan Kharal, the federal minister for information and broadcasting, has said the government will protect national interests while commencing trade with India. He said this while talking to reporters in Lahore yesterday after distributing the 38th Nigar film awards. Referring to alleged Indian preparations for another nuclear blast, he expressed hope that India will not conduct any nuclear blast as this would put pressure on the regional security situation.

India Wants Sea Route for Iranian Gas Pipeline

BK2012120495 Karachi BUSINESS RECORDER in English 19 Dec 95 pp 1,12

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Islamabad: India has asked Iran to prefer sea route for multi-billion dollar gas pipeline project due to its security concern via land route through Pakistan.

Pakistan and Iran were holding bilateral discussions to award land route survey contract to a German firm, but, now this proposed project may take a little longer than expected before implementation.

Government of Pakistan in principle has already expressed its willingness to allow India to import gas through Pakistani territory.

Both Pakistan and India are also holding bilateral negotiations with Qatar for gas import via sea route.

Bhutto Applauds Turkmenistan's Neutrality Stand

BK1812071195 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in Urdu 0200 GMT 18 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has said that Turkmenistan's permanent neutrality will greatly contribute to the strengthening of peace and security in the region. She said this in a message to Turkmen President Niyazov on the unanimous adoption of a resolution by the UN General Assembly about the neutrality of Turkmenistan. The prime minister said Pakistan and Turkmenistan enjoy cordial relations and we are happy to know about the status of permanent neutrality accorded to Turkmenistan.

Foreign Minister on Security Cooperation

NC2012122095 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1110 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 20 Dec (MENA) — Pakistani Foreign Minister Sardar Asif Ali has expressed confidence that his recent visit to Egypt will boost bilateral relations in all fields, particularly after the signing of economic and cultural cooperation agreements.

In statements to the weekly AL-MUSAWWAR, to be published on Friday [22 December], Sardar said his country has agreed to Egypt's demand to extradite 10 Egyptian extremists from terrorist groups who lived in Pakistan since the war in Afghanistan, including three who are regarded by Egypt as dangerous leaders of the al-Jihad group.

He added that Egypt has asked for the extradition of another person and that the search for him is continuing, despite constant threats sent to the Pakistani government by terrorist groups warning against extraditing these extremists to Egypt.

He said that the possibility of expanding the scope of the security cooperation agreement between the two countries is now under study at Egypt's request. He noted that Egyptian and Pakistani experts are now discussing the means of confronting the terrorist and extremist groups that have made Pakistan their home base since the Afghan war.

On developments in the bombing of the Egyptian embassy in Islamabad, Sardar Asif Ali said that Egyptian security experts are cooperating with their Pakistani counterparts, that the investigations have resulted in some progress, that the owner of the car used in the attack has been identified, and that some features of the driver who blew himself up have also been identified. He noted that there are great expectations of discovering new facts about the network of Egyptians operating in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

More Details of Coup Plotters' Trial Released

BK2012160795 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in Urdu 1500 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] The Defense Ministry has released more details of the case of the army officers involved in the coup plot. According to the press release issued by the Defense Ministry today, the judge of the Advocate General Department at the General Headquarters has prepared charges against the accused officers in the light of the summary of evidence and the pre-trial advice. The officers who were arrested in September and who are now being charged are: Major General Zahirul Islam Abbasi, Brigadier Mustnasar Billah, Colonel Mohammad Azad Minhas, and Col. Enayatullah Khan. The case against these officers is being heard by the field general court-martial and the accusations against them have been prepared under the provisions of the Pakistan Army Act. The final date for the hearing in the case will be fixed by the chairperson of the field general court-martial.

MQM Chief Lists 'Crimes' of Bhutto Government

BK1512155195 Karachi AMN in Urdu 5 Dec 95 pp 1, 7

[FBIS Translated Text] Honorable Altaf Hussain, the leader of the Muhajir Qaumi Movement [MQM], has said that the Pakistan People's Party's fascist and racist government is perpetrating such barbaric and inhuman crimes against the Muhajirs, which cannot be even thought of in a civilized society. A genocide is being committed against the Muhajirs; their women are being molested and beaten; and youths are being slaughtered; and to add insult to injury, the Muhajirs are not being allowed to pick up the corpses of their near and dear ones to carry them to the graveyard for burial. Their tyranny has increased so much that for the first time in history women have had to carry the biers of martyred Muhajirs to the graveyard and Benazir Bhutto, the so-called champion of women's rights, did not even care to utter a few words on this mournful tragedy. Altaf Hussain made these observations while addressing a simple but impressive ceremony marking the inauguration of the MQM's International Secretariat in London. The function was also addressed by Ajmal Dehlvi, the leader of the MQM negotiating committee; Tariq Javed and Sheikh Liaqat Hussain, members of the negotiating committee; M.A. Jaleel, a member of the MQM Liaison Committee; Altaf Hussain's political Secretary Nadeem Nusrat; Dr. Farooq Hasan, an eminent jurist and MQM's legal adviser; and Professor Arif. Dr. Amir Liaqat Hussain, the editor of the daily PARCHAM, presided over the function.

In his thought-provoking speech, Altaf Hussain explained with magnificent examples the philosophy of land and geography and informed the participants of the significance of revolutionary movements all over the world, referring to historical events in this regard. The leader of the movement spoke continuously for one hour and 28 minutes, during which he paid rich tribute to the officeholders and members of the MQM-United Kingdom wing and also to all his friends and colleagues who worked for establishing the MQM's International Secretariat.

Altaf Hussain said that on 19 June 1992, the worst ever operation in history was launched against the MQM with the hope of wiping out this movement which is based on truth and righteousness, but even after a lapse of three years and nine months, the MQM, praise be to God, is still intact and inviolable and has even grown stronger than before. He said Asif Nawaz [former Pakistani army chief], who used to arrogantly claim that he would wipe out the MQM, was himself finished by the divine power. He said Asif Nawaz was merely a human being but he appeared to think and behave somewhat like a god, God forbid; and that is why the Almighty God swung his stick and General Asif Nawaz departed from this world, nursing in his heart the dream of eliminating the MQM for ever. Altaf Hussain said the MQM is still alive and strong but Asif Nawaz, who tried to become a Pharaoh on earth, is no more. He said the massacre of our people is still continuing and in this genocide, "power mafia" is working in collusion with the fascist and racist government of Benazir Bhutto.

Drawing the participants' attention, the MQM leader said you learn everyday through newspapers that two, three, four or five MQM workers have been arrested from a particular place. In police custody, these arrested workers are subjected to worst kind of torture. They are made the targets of barbaric and inhuman crimes and then murdered ruthlessly. He said that after shedding the blood of the innocent Muhajirs, the government issues statements in the press that the workers were killed in "police encounters." Referring to the arrest and martyrdom of Mohammad Naim, an MQM worker from Korangi, the movement leader chokingly said that the barbaric police and the Rangers personnel arrested Mohammad Naim on the orders of Interior Minister Nasirullah Babar and subjected him to worst kind of torture. When that innocent youth was tortured to martyrdom, these tyrants and ruthless officials carried out a black act, the likes of which has never been witnessed in the history of mankind. When the bier of Mohammad Naim was being taken to the graveyard, those heartless personnel fired at the funeral procession. The participants of the funeral procession panicked and fled to seek cover, leaving the coffin on the ground. After a few minutes, some elderly people gathered their courage and started carrying the bier to the graveyard, but the wild Rangers and police personnel again displayed their savagery and barbarism and fired at the procession. The men had to disperse for the second time and the coffin was left lying — like the corpse of an heirless person — on the street for several hours. Now, who was to take the coffin to the graveyard? The leader asked: What kind of tyranny is this, in which people are being tortured to death but their next of kin are not being allowed to bury them ...? He added that when Muhajir mothers and sisters, who generally sit behind the curtain, saw the coffin lying on the street for a long time, they could not tolerate it. These veiled mothers and sisters came forward to carry the coffin of their young worthy son and buried him in the graveyard. The MQM leader showed to the audience a picture published in a local daily showing women carrying Mohammad Naim's coffin on their shoulders to the graveyard. Altaf Hussain asked: Did our ancestors create Pakistan to see the day when our veiled mothers and sisters would be forced to carry their dead to the graveyard...? Did they sacrifice 2 million lives only to see this day...? Were the slogans of there is no god but Allah raised only to witness this tyranny...? Were the honors of hundreds of thousands of people sacrificed only to see this tragedy...? The leader drew the attention of the audience and urged them in an emotionally choked voice to think if an example of this tragedy — "women carrying the coffin" — can ever be found in the entire history of Islam and the humankind. May not any mother, sister, or daughter be forced, God forbid, to see this day! May not the mothers of our nation be forced to carry more coffins on their shoulders!

Altaf Hussain asked: Who should we seek justice from ...? Where should we go to seek justice...? Which door should we knock on...? Who should we call for help...? No one is ready to listen to our grievances.... No one has any sympathy for us oppressed people.... Benazir Bhutto should imagine how she would feel if the female members of the Bhutto family were to carry on their weak shoulders the coffins of their men to the graveyard.... Would not her heart break with the intensity of her sorrow...? The MQM chief said that genocide is being openly committed against the Muhajirs who are not being allowed even to bury their martyred kith and kin. We are so helpless that we cannot even bury our martyred colleagues, he added.

On this occasion, the leader of the movement cited examples of land and geography and said that on a land where murders are committed one after another, where the tyrants do not tire of committing crimes and do not show mercy to others, the history is witness that the geography of that land gets dismantled and that dismantled geography provides a separate land to the oppressed. He said the land is like our mother in whose lap children grow and become adult by eating the grains that grow tearing apart the bosom of the earth. Later, after their death, the same mother takes her children back into her lap. He said the land cannot tolerate the massacre of its children for long and if such massacres continue unabated, it changes its geography and becomes the property of the oppressed. Giving historical references, Altaf Hussain said that when the British occupied the Indian Subcontinent and made the lives of Muslims difficult, shed their blood in every lane and locality, the land offered a new country that was called Pakistan. Drawing the parallel, the MQM leader said that when the blood of Bengalis was spilled in this very land, Pakistan, and when the Land of Bengal saw that the blood of its children was permeating its bosom and demanding justice and protection, the same land offered another country, Bangladesh, to the Bengalis. He said now again massacre is being committed, blood is being spilled in every alley and locality, people's eyeballs are being removed, people's heads are being drilled and their brains taken out, their skin is being taken off and nails pulled out, and the flesh of their bodies is being scratched in the same manner as hungry wolves do. The land is watching these barbaric and heinous crimes of the ruthless rulers silently. If the rulers are not checked from committing these crimes, then the land will become helpless and once more geography will be changed.

Altaf Hussain said there is a limit to tyranny and hostility. After all, what is our crime...? Why are we being punished in this manner? He said the people who believe in ideology do not fear even the biggest tyrant, because they know that every tyrant and oppressor will meet his end and the God will give him exemplary punishment for all his crimes.

The MQM leader said even though I have been living in exile in London, I have never betrayed the Muhajir cause. I had started this movement based on truth and justice from a very small room, but today, by the grace of God, we by virtue of our hard work, dedication, total commitment to our cause, blessings of the truth-loving people, sacrifices of the martyrs, resoluteness of our colleagues, and firm faith in our ideology have succeeded in establishing an impressive office of the "MQM's International Secretariat" in this very city of London.

Altaf Hussain said our objective is not to grab power but to achieve our rights. We want jobs, admission to colleges and universities, and representation in the police, the armed forces, and the bureaucracy proportionate to our population. We are not power-loving, but truth-loving people and say only what we consider to be true. If the ruthless rulers think that they will eliminate us by intimidating or killing us, then they should remember that the flowing blood of martyrs becomes manure from which fresh crops grow. Today such crops are growing in the form of our devoted colleagues, adding new glaring chapter to the movement based on truth and justice. He said history bears witness that neither any truth-loving movement has ever been crushed with bullets in the past nor can the MQM be eliminated now. Altaf Hussain said in the beginning, the MQM's influence was limited to Sindh, especially to Karachi and Hyderabad, but the government's operation has strengthened it at international level. Now the MQM's name is recognized all over the world; and so long as it continues to enjoy the blessings of God and the support of the masses, none can eliminate it.

Referring to the arrest of the brothers of Rawoof Siddiqi, the chief organizer of the Muhibban-i-Pakistan [Friends of Pakistan], Altaf Hussain said the work being done by Rawoof Siddiqi for the movement through the platform of his Muhibban-i-Pakistan cannot be praised and described in words. He said when the barbaric [preceding word in English] Nasirullah Babar saw that Rawoof Siddiqi was working around-the-clock for the MQM, he had his brothers arrested, but Rawoof Siddiqi did not lose heart and continued to work for the movement with the same intensity and dedication as before. He paid rich tribute to Rawoof Siddiqi in his absence for his services in the establishment of the MQM's International Secretariat and prayed to God to always keep him steadfast in his resolve. Altaf Hussain paid tributes individually to all MQM leaders and workers who worked for the establishment of the secretariat. He paid rich tribute to Ajmal Dehlvi, the leader of the MQM negotiating committee; and members — Tariq Javed, Sheikh Liaqat Hussain, Shoaib Bukhari Advocate, and Qazi Khalid Ali Advocate — for presenting the Muhajir nation's case in an honorable manner and for their courage and steadfastness and prayed to God to shower His blessings on these five members and grant them the strength to maintain their steadfastness in the days ahead. At the end of his address, Altaf Hussain fervently prayed to God for the salvation of the souls of the martyrs and for the success of the movement.

Altaf Group Criticized for Delaying Talks

BK2112032395 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 1400 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The federal minister for law and parliamentary affairs, Professor N.D. Khan, has said the Altaf Group negotiating team is aggravating the problems facing the people in Karachi by delaying tactics for resumption of negotiations with the government. Talking to newsmen in Islamabad today, he said the Altaf Group should address the grave problems like joblessness, electricity, and transport. They seem to be bent upon delaying the talks and their attitude toward the problem is incomprehensible from the very beginning. In reply to a question, he said that terrorism by the Altaf Group is spilling the blood of the innocent citizens and stalling permanent peace in the city. He made it clear that the government is sincere about resolving the problems of Karachi and by implementing the prime minister's package, a number of difficulties facing the people there would be removed.

Replying to another question, he said the president has always been asking for negotiations to resolve the problems, for which terrorism should be stopped.

Two 'Terrorists' Killed in Karachi Encounter

BK2012155595 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in Urdu 1500 GMT 20 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] In Karachi, two terrorists were killed in an encounter with the police after they killed two persons offering prayers at a bungalow at the time of early morning prayers today. Three others were wounded in the shoot-out. One of the terrorists managed to escape.

'Press Note' Says 4 Killed in Karachi Violence

BK2112041595 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in Urdu 0200 GMT 21 Dec 95

[FBIS Translated Text] According to a press note issued in Karachi last night, four people, including a police head constable, were killed in various violent incidents in the city yesterday.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan People's Party in District Central conducted a torch-bearing procession last night from Ghalib Library in Nazimabad to Lasbela Chowk. The procession was organized to highlight the spirit of brotherhood, national solidarity, unity, and cohesion. The participants in the procession shouted slogans against terrorism and demanded the establishment of peace in the city. Speakers addressing the procession said the people of Karachi want peace and the government is making every possible effort to resolve the problems.

Sri Lanka

Official Vows LTTE Destruction, Refugee Return

BK2112050595 Colombo DAILY NEWS in English 21 Dec 95

[Report by Richard de Silva — received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Deputy Defence Minister Anuruddha Ratwatte yesterday said that all those who were driven out of their homes in Jaffna by the tigers will be able to get back to their homes by Sinhala and Hindu New Year next.

"We will create the necessary conditions and atmosphere for that by destroying the terrorists and their leader shortly", the Minister said.

He said that over 100,000 persons had been driven out of Jaffna by the terrorists after 1983, and they would be able to return to their homes by Sinhala New Year.

The Minister announced this after he had received donations to the National Defence Fund (nearly Rs. [rupees] 1 million) from numerous organisations and individuals at the Defence Ministry, Colombo.

He said: "We will destroy the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] terrorists and their leader Prabhakaran soon. We will bring back normalcy to Jaffna before long.

"Police stations, court houses, grama sevakas [village offices] and government offices will be brought back along with the civil administration. Jaffna will be rebuilt by the government. People of Jaffna will enjoy all that the rest of the nation were entitled to. Peace for all throughout the island will be a reality soon," he stressed.

Security Forces Said To Break 'Terrorist Backbone'

BK2112024495 Colombo DAILY NEWS in English 21 Dec 95

[Received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Several thousands of Tamil civilians from Jaffna who were forced by the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] to migrate to Kilinochchi on the mainland before the fall of the city to Riviresa [sunshine] troops, have warned the Tiger hiararchy that they would go on a fast unto death en masse if they were not allowed to return home.

These refugees who are being held against their will and made to undergo immense hardship in make-shift camps have clearly told the LTTE that they have come to the end of their patience.

"These civilians have made it clear that their only concern is to return home and resume normal life and they do not want to become a human shield for Tigers or catspaws of the LTTE's military or political game," a government servant from the North has told military sources in Vavuniya.

The LTTE leaders have refused "visas" to Tamil civilians from Jaffna saying that the return of civilians to government-held areas would cause a setback to their separatist campaign.

The LTTE leaders are asking these refugees to settle down in the Vanni until Jaffna is won back. But the majority of the refugees think that the LTTE's vision of a re-captured Jaffna is a mere day dream, the travellers from Kilinochchi say, reports said.

Meanwhile, Police commandos backed by air force gunships have already broken the terrorist backbone in the East and are engaged in mopping up operations.

The security forces have already destroyed the Tiger camps and hideouts in the jungles off Tharavikulam, Koramlikulam, Werugalaru and Koddimurivikulai. The military believe that the terrorists are in utter disarray now and there is no possibility for another build up in the East.

Troops in Jaffna city continue clearing mines and booby traps. They have also demarcated areas which are yet to be cleared to ward off possible danger to civilians who are expected back home soon.

"This is the season when people in Jaffna harvest their luscious karthakolomban mangoes. But none in uncleared areas would dare pick the fruits because of the danger of stepping on Johnny mines," a Jaffna Tamil now in the city said yesterday.

Our Trincomalee district correspondent reported yesterday that a bus with a complement of passengers was hijacked by terrorists at Navalkady. The Sampur-bound bus was also carrying dry rations for the Sampur army detachment. Terrorists had taken away the vehicle after offloading the passengers including the driver and the conductor.

LTTE Issues Press Releases for 18, 19 Dec

Reports on Missing Persons

[redacted]12024795 (Internet) TAMIL EELAM NEWS WWW in English 19 Dec 95

["Press Release" issued by the LTTE Political Committee from "LTTE Headquarters" on 18 December]

[FBIS Transcribed Text]

27 Tamil civilians arrested by the army are missing

During January to October 1995, a number of Tamil civilians have been arrested by the Sri Lankan [S.L.] army in Trincomalee district. Out of those arrested, the whereabouts of 27 are not known. All inquiries made by various human rights groups have drawn no response from the army authorities. Of those arrested 7 persons are young women. Meanwhile 62 Tamil prisoners are detained in Trincomalee army camps for more than an year. They are being employed to do various jobs in the form of forced labour, without being paid any remuneration and without any hope of being released.

9000 Tamil youths missing in Eastern province

It is estimated that a total number of 9000 Tamil youths of both sexes have been massacred by the army in the Eastern province prior to the year 1994. The actual fate of these unfortunate people is not known. Where their bodies were laid to rest and when they were killed is a mystery. But the fact remains that they were arrested by the Sri Lankan armed forces during the above period.

Special care of the young

The TEEDOR, TRO [expansions unknown] and the Redbarna [not further identified] have jointly evolved a scheme for the welfare of the young people who are living in refugee camps and in other temporary accommodations. The TRO has selected 20 people for training in child welfare, who will be eventually assigned to 7 welfare centres set up in Chavakachcheri, Madduvil, Palai, Kodikamam and Kaithady in Thenmaratchy and Varani in Vadamaratchy areas. These centres will concentrate on looking after the physical welfare and psychological needs of the young.

Batticaloa Town under Army house to house search

All movements of transport and traffic into and out of the Batticaloa town has been stopped by the Sri Lankan army. The army has cordoned off the area and is engaged in a house to house search in the area covering Eravur and Senkaladdy. The army action has not only escalated the fears and tensions of the Tamil people, but has also prevented a large number of Tamil students from appearing for their examinations.

Heads of schools and teachers do voluntary service in welfare centres

The heads and teachers of 19 schools of the Vanni mainland are performing voluntary services in the welfare centres where the new arrivals are staying. Their services are being co-ordinated by TEEDOR and TRO organisations who are responsible for the supply of food and general welfare of the new arrivals.

Aid given by the various International groups has not reached the Tamil displaced people

It is reliably known that the money and materials donated by various International aid organisations has not reached the displaced Tamils to whom these were intended. The Sri Lankan government has made it a rule that all aid should be handed over to them. The government of Norway has recently handed over a sum of 7.5 million rupees for the care of the displaced Tamils. Whether this money will be spent on the Tamil people is a big question. Meanwhile the government is spending huge sums of money on the welfare of the armed forces and has also set up elaborate schemes for the welfare of the parents of the army personnel.

Shortage of liquid cash in Jaffna banks now — relocated in Vanni mainland

Bank account holders are undergoing tremendous hardship as a result of a drastic shortage of liquid cash in all the Sri Lankan government banks of the Jaffna district that are now relocated in the Vanni mainland. In a meeting organised by the Jaffna Secretariat in Vanni, the managers of the said banks confessed that they are helpless in this matter. The Sri Lankan army joint operations command in Colombo has put a stop to the transfer of money from Colombo to the Jaffna branches.

S.L. Government delays supply of food to the displaced Tamils living in the Vanni mainland

3 metric tons of essential food items are required for the upkeep of the 250,000 of displaced Tamils

now found in the Vanni mainland. A limited amount of food items are transported through Vavuniya by lorries, which is absolutely not adequate for the 250,000 displaced Tamils and the original residents of Vanni. It has been pointed out that as the displaced persons are from Valigamam area (Jaffna), it is the responsibility of the Government Agent of Jaffna and not that of the Government Agents of Vanni to get down enough essential food items to meet their requirements. It is believed that this conflicting bureaucratic instructions has been issued only for the purposes of adding more suffering to the Tamil people.

[Signed] Political Committee, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam [LTTE]
(English translation of the LTTE statement released by LTTE international secretariat, 211 Katherine Road, London E6 1BU, United Kingdom, Tel/Fax: 0181-470 8593.)

Refugee Camps, Other Problems

BK2112031895 (Internet) TAMIL EELAM NEWS WWW in English 20 Dec 95

["Press Release" issued by the LTTE Political Committee from "LTTE Headquarters" on 19 December]

[FBIS Transcribed Text]

Co-operative retail outlets to be opened in the Vanni mainland

The Jaffna Assistant Commissioner for Co-operatives has in a press statement declared that the multi purpose co-operative societies of Valigamam will open their retail stores in the Vanni mainland. This will occur within a few days the said officer stated. The requirements of the retail stores will be supplied by the department in his charge.

Sri Lankan Army shoots and arrests innocent Tamil girl of 10 years

The Trincomalee based army had shot at an innocent Tamil girl of ten years and taken her with them. She was picking firewood in the jungle of Iththikulam when the army personnel shot her below the knee. The army states that they mistook the girl for a crane which is a bird commonly found in this jungle.

Bus transport stopped in some of the areas of Batticaloa district

The 20 mile distance from Valaichenai to Vagarai was served by Sri Lankan government owned bus service. This has been brought to a sudden halt on the orders of the Sri Lankan army. By this action, the people of the area are suffering immense hardship.

Shortage of Malathion in Vadamaratchy and Thenmaratchy areas

Flies, mosquitoes and insects are on the increase in the Thenmaratchy and Vadamaratchy areas. Diseases like diarrhoea are spreading due to lack of Malathion. To bring an end to this state of affairs anti mosquito remedies like Malathion is required in large quantities. Unfortunately there is a big shortage of Malathion in these areas.

Valigamam people herded together in refugee camps

People who were not able to leave the Valigamam area during the time of the army advance are now under the total control of the Sri Lankan army. They are not allowed to stay in their own houses. The army has erected refugee camps and have placed these people under their direct observation. They are to be issued special identity cards for the army to have checks on their movements.

1998 families seek refuge in Allarai in the North

1998 families from Valigamam West have taken refuge in the Gramasevaka's division of Allarai in the North. Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation of the area is taking care of them.

Arts and music festival in Vadamaratchy

An art and music festival portraying the hard times of the people and the National struggle for freedom is being conducted in the Vadamaratchy East. The youths of this area are in charge of the organisation of these events. As a result of this festival several heads of schools, teachers, students of both sexes have joined the armed section of the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam].

Shortage of liquid cash in Kilinochchi

The Sri Lankan Government Agent of Kilinochchi has requested the government for permission to bring 5 million rupees of cash from Colombo to serve the Sri Lankan government banks in Kilinochchi that is suffering from an acute shortage of cash. This request has been turned down by the Sri Lankan government at the behest of the Joint Operations Command of the armed forces. Payment of salaries and pension is done by cheque. Banks to whom these cheques are submitted have no cash to pay.

[Signed] Political Committee, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
(English translation of the LTTE statement released by LTTE international secretariat, 211 Katherine Road,

London E6 1BU, United Kingdom, Tel/Fax: 0181-470 8593.)

LTTE: Army Preparing 'Second Phase' of Offensive

BK2112075195 (Internet) TAMIL EELAM NEWS WWW in Tamil 18 Dec 95

["Compilation of the telephone messages of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The troops are making preparations for the second phase of the military Operation Riviresa [sunshine]. It has been learned that a large quantity of military hardware has been acquired for this operation and that a major portion of that hardware has already reached Colombo. It has also been learned that a number of battle tanks has been purchased to replace those destroyed by the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] during Operation Riviresa and that several have been dispatched to the Vettilaikerny military camp. In the meantime, it is to be noted that there has been an extraordinary increase in the movement of soldiers in Elephant Pass and Pooneryn military camps.

Reverent Father Immanuel, the Catholic bishop of the Jaffna Diocese, has issued an appeal for every Tamil to come forward under the present circumstances and play his due role. The appeal made to the people to move out of their localities should be construed as advice for their protection only. If the people had not moved out of their localities in response to the LTTE's call, we would have suffered losses at an inconceivable level. In an interview with the newspaper EELANADAM, the bishop stated that it was only a precautionary step. He added that the LTTE has been looking after the welfare of displaced people, to the surprise of international organizations. We wholeheartedly appreciate this act by the LTTE. The bishop also stated that the people should always be grateful to the LTTE for this act.

The people are facing severe hardships due to the continuous search operations being carried out by soldiers in the Batticaloa area. The soldiers have closed the Eravur-Chankalady highway leading to Batticaloa for their search operations. Reports emanating from those areas say that the attendance of students at schools has dropped considerably because a number of schoolchildren have been arrested.

There is a shortage of essential commodities in the Wanni area. Officials have stated that they do not have sufficient stocks of food and medicine. The officials add that the Army's ban on carrying medicine through the Thandikulam camp is intact and that medicine being carried by civilians for their personal use is being confiscated by soldiers.

A report published by a human rights organization says that 27 Tamil civilians were arrested in Trincomalee District in October alone and that it is not possible to learn the condition of these people. The report adds that there are seven young women among those arrested and that 62 civilians have been detained by soldiers during the year. The report calls for their unconditional release.

The Tamil Rehabilitation Organization has recruited and organized training classes for volunteers to help those who migrated from Weligama to Wanni. Thereafter, these volunteers are being sent in groups of 10 each to Wanni.

The LTTE's thirst is for the motherland of Tamil Eelam!

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